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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ATTITUDES, INFLUENCES AND EXPECTATIONS OF ADOLESCENT DATING BEHAVIORS: A SURVEY OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

BY
ELSIE E. FEHLAUER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION
IN
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL, 1992

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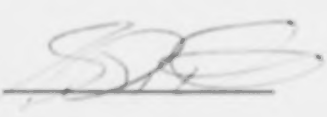
Signed: 

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DEDICATION

To Fred, my husband, for believing in me,
and to my children, Aaron, Alison, Katelyn, and Eric,
for their patience and support.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between adolescents' peer expected dating behaviours and their actual dating behaviours. The study, conducted in a small central Alberta town, focussed on three areas: expectations of the dating behaviours of the peers of the surveyed adolescents, the actual dating behaviours reported by the survey sample, and the sexual attitudes, sexual behaviours, and influences of these variables. Theoretically, falling on Erikson's theory of adolescent search for identity, it was postulated that a primary purpose of dating, for the adolescent is to strive for independence from parental control while also searching to satisfy the need for intimacy.

Two hundred and twenty-eight high school students voluntarily took part of the survey. Almost all completed the survey within the same time period on the same day while in class. Complete confidentiality was assured, and extreme care was taken to ensure the respondents' anonymity.

Surveys were statistically analysed using the Statview 512+ program for Chi-square analysis wherever possible. Noteworthy among the data gathered, was the strong support given to the "permissiveness with affection" code and the existence of the "double standard" for acceptable sexual behaviour. Reported dating behaviours reflected the respondents' perceptions that they were more experienced that their peers. Gender differences appeared to exist for the two, less committed levels of dating, but when going steady, the female respondents reflected similar

behaviours and expectations to those forwarded by their male counterparts.

Roughly half of the surveyed students indicated they had been sexually active, most by the time they were fifteen years of age. Religiosity, academic success, level of alcohol consumption, drug and tobacco use, as well as parents' marital status were strongly associated with sexual activity of the adolescents in this survey. Results further indicated that although the peer group influences adolescent behaviours, the parents are of equal importance in influencing adolescent decisions.
Implications of these findings for parents, counsellors, educators, parents and health officials are discussed. Further research is recommended to provide external validity, and to enhance the generalizability of the results.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The psychological community is in general agreement that adolescence is a period of turbulence for many of our young people. Not only are they experiencing massive physiological changes, often accompanied by discomforting and fluctuating hormonal levels, but many theorists such as Erikson (1968), claim that they are also engaged in the quest for self identity and autonomy. During this developmental period, adolescents, in their search for autonomy, often make decided efforts to reduce their dependencies upon the parents, and may even become very confrontational, causing the homes to assume the emotional tensions and hostilities of a battleground (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Kostash, 1987; Coleman & Hendry, 1990).

Parents, understandably, become concerned: concerned about the "personality changes" in their adolescents, concerned about the flagrant disregard for parental opinions, values, and rules, and very concerned about the perceived influence of the peer group. Indeed, adolescents often do seek out peers with whom they may share their innermost thoughts, their fears, their aspirations, and their dreams. Newman and Newman (1986) postulated that the major task of adolescence was to affiliate with a peer group that could accept the teen's budding sense of identity

and yet provide supportive social relationships to offset their withdrawal from emotional dependence upon their parents.

During adolescence, individuals are exposed to new social situations, for which they often perceive a need for new social-interaction skills. Peer relations frequently become more intense and extensive, family relations may be altered, and adolescents may begin to encounter new demands socially as they begin both dating and working (Coleman & Hendry, 1990; Pearl, Bryan, & Herzog, 1990). Lowe and Radius (1987) claim that "for many adolescents, exploration of sexual identity entails sexual activity; that is heterosexual intercourse" (p. 291).

This exploration of sexual identity is what causes such concern for adults, parents, educators, and health officials. Adams and Gullotta (1983) define intimacy as "a need for closeness, a sense of emotional feeling for another, and the ability to share feeling honestly" (p. 315). This is perceived by many to be a vital component of adolescent relationships, and a major task of the adolescent period. Add these factors to the overwhelming effect of media, in particular television, videos, and movies, with their provocative portrayal of sexual relationships, and we have just cause for concern (Haffner & Kelly, 1988). Adams and Gullotta (1983) state that "television strongly shapes our attitudes toward people, places and things. If we see it on television, we tend to believe it." (p. 298).

Adolescents, often confused, are receiving contradictory messages, especially about heterosexual relationships. Thus, it is

in the peer groups that they may find frames of reference for social attitudes and behaviours. These peer groups help alleviate much indecision and anxiety about acceptable social behaviour for adolescents, but, in doing so, may also create in the teenagers strong dependencies and strong pressures to conform to peer norms (Pombeni, Kirchner, & Palmonari, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). While searching for self identity, autonomy, and intimacy, adolescents are sent conflicting messages, the message that "Yes, sex is okay. . .everyone is doing it" from the media, and peer groups, but "No, you're too young. . .premarital sex is wrong" messages from parents, clergy and educators.

Although much evidence exists that teens rely on parental approval and advice for important long-term decisions such as future career plans, it is the peer group to whom they turn when the issues involve social activities, dating, and sex (Collins, 1974; Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Clausen & Brown, 1985; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Wilkes, 1986; Rice, 1987). Given that dating is seen as an acceptable and pleasant socially approved outlet for heterosexual interests among teens (McCabe, 1984), and that it is generally assumed every date has some erotic component to it, whether it be hugging, kissing, necking, petting, and ultimately, sexual intercourse (Herold, 1984; Meitkle, Peitchinis, & Pearce, 1985; Bibby & Posterski, 1985) educators and parents often worry about adolescents' behaviour. Many believe the media about the "sexual revolution" of increased sexual activity among our teens in the last two decades (Darling, Kallen, & Van Dusen, 1984).

Perhaps it is the media focus which has frightened the helping community. Certainly we cannot deny the statistics of teen pregnancies, the escalating numbers of chlamydia cases, the rising demand for abortions among the youth of Canada, and the ever increasing threat of AIDs (Meikle et al., 1985; King et al., 1988). However, more researchers are beginning to question whether there, in fact, was a revolution at all (Bibby & Posterski, 1985). The "revolution" may have occurred as a change in the openness of discussion regarding sex rather than as a result of significant behaviour changes. Many researchers suggest that a significant number of teens are beginning to choose abstinence and not sexual intercourse as viable components of their dating activities (Murstein, Chalpin, Heard, & Vyse, 1989; Hess, 1990). The research, however, is limited, and more needs to be conducted to establish a convincing argument, providing the community with current, reliable, and pertinent data from local Canadian high school students.

Relevance of the Research

Publicised data on sexual behaviour may not be relevant for Canadian high school students in 1992. Much of the existing data was collected by surveying college and university students, and by asking questions retrospectively (Nielson, 1987). Memories about sexual behaviour are notoriously unreliable. Also, much of the research is becoming dated, and may not be relevant for today's adolescents (Meikle, et al. 1985).

Furthermore, most of the studies cited were conducted in the United States, and certainly, for the conclusions to be applicable to our Canadian youth, we need to focus on Canadian subjects in Canadian settings. A further concern that must be addressed is the issue of "overgeneralising" (Adams & Gullotta, 1983). We are cautioned that it is imperative that we not take conclusions from a specific group and generalise them to all groups. Adolescents of the same age, residing in the same city, may not exhibit similar attitudes and behaviours: rather, their attitudes and behaviours could potentially be at opposite ends of a continuum. It must be noted that the behaviours and needs of inner city school students need not reflect those of students residing in the suburbs; as those of Toronto youth need not reflect the attitudes and behaviours of Edmonton residents.

Despite differences among groups, certain trends are being recognised among researchers. Teens who seek academic success are not as sexually active as those with lessor goals (Meikle, 1985; Bibby & Posterski, 1985). Teens do tend to seek peers who share similar values and interests as themselves, which gratifyingly for parents, reflect parent-conforming responses (Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Herold, 1984; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Wilks, 1986). Also, sex education programmes, which have been mandated by the governments, have not, as was feared by some, resulted in increased teenage promiscuity (Rodman, Lewis, & Griffith, 1988; Mills, 1987; Herold, 1987).

The impetus for the current study of this thesis came from

the experiences the researcher has had in dealing with students in a high school in a small community close to Edmonton, Alberta. From experience in the classroom teaching the Sexual Awareness component in the Career and Life Management curriculum, as well as from the interactions with teens in the guidance office, the researcher believed that teens were more "in tune" with their parental values than the media would have us believe. Thus, it is anticipated, prior to the study being conducted, that information gathered from a survey of sexual attitudes and behaviours, would help restore some confidence in parents and educators alike, by showing that teenage promiscuity is not rampant and that society is doing a fairly good job of "socialising the young". This researcher also supported Bibby and Posterski (1985) in their claim that "today's adolescents don't give evidence of being any different in their outlook and their behaviour from adults around them" (p. 93).

Purpose of the Research

During the worst of the rebellious years, parents feared they "lost control" of their adolescents: control which they believed the peer group had gained. Nowhere were the fears and uncertainties of the parents greater than when their offspring were dating, for it is while dating that young people dealt with the opposing forces of biological drives, emotional needs, peer pressure and parental pressure. The media driven images of sexual liberation helped fan those flames of uncertainty, as did

the lack of knowledge about adolescent dating behaviours. The latter concern was addressed through this research.

The focus of this study has been to examine the dating behaviours and expected peer group norms of the high school student. Collins (1974) surmised that perhaps much of the confusion about teenage equal behaviours and expectations lie in the uncertainty surrounding norms of the peer group. Adolescents may be confused about how much sexual activity is expected and/or permitted by the ambiguous messages they are receiving, especially as they have received no clear initiation into behavioural norms.

The concern, which it was hoped would be somewhat abated by this study, is that teens may believe that peer norms expect greater sexual behaviours than in actuality, exist. Collins (1974), upon whose research this proposed study is loosely based, provided the rationale for this study: "without the benefit of meaningful data and with an unrealistic picture of rampant teenage sexuality being created by unfounded statements from adults, most adolescents, who are relatively sexually inexperienced, may feel that they are different if they are not sexually active" (p. 319).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to gather information about peer expectations in dating and sexual behaviour, and to determine whether discrepancies between behaviour and expectations exist which could bring pressure on the adolescent to seek greater sexual experience. Furthermore, current and

relevant information has been garnered regarding the interpersonal relationships of today's adolescent, which will be invaluable for parents and educators alike, in order to address the needs of the teenagers in the community. Finally, statistical information was sought with regards to the prevailing sexual attitudes and behaviours of the high school adolescent in order to foster better understanding and relevant programming. The results of this research should be of theoretical and practical interest to educators, to parents, and to helping professions within the community setting.

Overview of Chapters

Following this first chapter, which has provided a summary of the statement of the research problem and the relevance of the study, is a detailed review of the literature in chapter two. The relevant research on adolescent issues related to their search for identity and focussing on their interpersonal relationships is summarised and critiqued. Dating, and its overwhelming relative, adolescent sexual behaviour is discussed at length, providing an overview for the development and purpose of this survey.

The research method and procedures are outlined in the third chapter, followed by the extensive tabulation of results in chapter four. Discussion of the results, implications, limitation of the study, and suggestions for further research are included in the last chapter.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the professional literature dealing with adolescent dating behaviours and sexuality from the perspective of adolescence as a transformation period of identity crisis. Consequently, the review begins with a brief overview of Erik Erikson's theory of identity formation, and compares it to Bandura's social learning theory, in an attempt to establish rationale for adolescent behaviours. Noteworthy among the developmental tasks identified from these theorists are the need for established identity, autonomy, and intimacy.

Since it is arguable that adolescents turn to peers for help in achieving these tasks, the focus turns to the social activity known as dating, the purposes served by dating, the intensity of steady dating and its effects, and, of course, the intimate behaviours associated with dating, namely petting and sexual intercourse. Factors influencing adolescent sexual activity are reviewed with a particular focus on the effects of mass media, parental values and peer group influences. This is followed by the question about the existence of a sexual revolution. Finally, the research questions arising from the literature, which are addressed by this study, are presented.

Tasks of Adolescence: Identity and Autonomy

In all periods of history and culture, adolescence has been the critical period during which the adolescent must define himself and carve out places for themselves in society. The changes that occur in adolescence are both developmental and cultural. With biological changes come emotional, social and intellectual development, transforming the dependent children into independent personas, ready to leave the parental home, to maintain themselves, and to manage their own resources. Added to the developmental confusion of this transitional period, are the cultural changes the adolescent must adapt to: cultural changes which include changing employment patterns, increasing educational demands, dismantling and restructuring family patterns, and confusing sexual messages.

Erik Erikson, in his theory of identity formation (1968), takes the position that adolescence is a time of considerable stress for adolescents, a time of identity crisis where the youth must achieve the goal of establishing satisfactory identities before continuing on to the next stage of establishing a sense of intimacy or close, stable relationships with others. This theory manifestly implies a period of difficulty and disruption, rather than one of stability. It also deals with the concept of psychosocial moratorium (Coleman, 1974). Just as in the psychoanalytic theory, where the latency stage may be viewed as a time of psychosexual delay, when sexual development is in abeyance, so a similar

situation may exist in adolescence and in the search for identity, in that society allows, or perhaps more accurately, creates, a time of life when the individual may delay major identity decisions, and may experiment with various roles in order to discover the self.

It is believed by many researchers that this period of "storm and stress" or "Sturm und Drang", as G. Stanley Hall first labelled the turbulence of the adolescent period in 1904, is a characteristic of the modern, highly technological society, where an extended period of time is allowed for adolescents to seek and prepare themselves for their roles in society. (Coleman & Hendry, 1990; Hotvedt, 1990). The "modernised society" is described by Hotvedt as one that is characterised by high technological development, with a small segment of the population producing food for larger populations of highly specialised, generally urban workers. It is also manifested by individualised ownership of property, governmental rather than kinship authority, and service oriented labour, with emphasis on long training periods for large, complex jobs, for which there is intense competition. In this "modernised society", the adolescent period is a necessarily long time period, often lasting until the early twenties when occupational training is nearly completed and/or economic independence is established.

Albert Bandura (1977), a noted social learning theorist, argues against this perception of adolescence. He believes the concept of "storm and stress" is greatly exaggerated, claiming

stability and cooperation, with mutually satisfying relationships, are more the norm. He does not agree that the adolescent experiences severe problems in seeking independence, that parent/teen relationships deteriorate during this time period, nor that the adolescents develop slavish conformity to the peer group. Bandura suggests that this illusion of stress may have been created by mass media sensationalism, generalisations using inappropriate samples, such as deviant groups of adolescents, and possibly a result of the "self fulfilling prophecy": in that if society labels teens as rebellious, then so they will be.

Bandura and his associates (Bandura, Adams, & Beyer, 1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963) believe that adolescents, as active mediators, observe, acquire information, and develop expectancies about consequences of behaviours of others such as their parents or other significant others that guide their own behaviour and help establish internal standards. Thus, through vicarious reinforcement, adolescents learn by observing, or by imitating modelled behaviour.

Peterson and Leigh (1990), write that the success of observational learning rests with positive, supportive and encouraging parental behaviours. They claim that supportive child-rearing predict adolescent conformity to parental expectations, that adolescents who perceives themselves to be valued and accepted by parents, will seek to increase positive support by accommodating their actions to those sought by these significant others. This then, argue Peterson and Leigh, not only

fosters stronger parent-adolescent relationships, but also encourages adolescent autonomy for successful interpersonal relationships outside the family.

Certainly there are teens who do not struggle with self identity, who do appear to serenely move through this developmental period without exhibiting outward stress and turbulence. However, many theorists accepted and built upon the model presented by Erikson. Noteworthy among these is James Marcia (1966), who proposed that identity could be measured along two dimensions: exploration in the search process for a stable and self-defined identity and commitment to relatively stable elements of an identity. Using these two dimensions of exploration and commitment, Marcia operationalized Erikson's theory of identity formation and developed four basic identity statuses for adolescents with "Identity Achievement" being the hiatus of development. The achieved youth, in Marcia's proposal, has engaged in a search process, has experienced an identity crisis, and has resolved it through self-selected personal commitments that reflect self-definition.

Coleman (1974) hypothesised that Erikson's use of identity could be roughly synonymous with self-image. Citing Douvan and Adelson (1966), he argues that adolescents hold two conceptions about themselves: the present, or what they are; and the future, what they will be. Coleman argues that the conflict is not apparent for the present, but for the future self image, a conflict which increases with the age of the adolescent.

The adolescent is not just absorbed with a search for identity, but also with the establishment of autonomy. Regardless of how the experts listed the developmental tasks of adolescents, (Havighurst, 1953; Corey, 1954; Cole & Hall, 1970), all cite the importance of establishing independence from adults and parental domination, and the establishment of and acceptance of appropriate sex roles and heterosexual behaviour. Desjarlais and Rackauskas (1986) emphasised the dynamic nature of the interaction between the individual and society. They expressed concern about the demands which the changing structures of our society place upon adolescents. In the past, the search for autonomy and identity of the adolescent took place in a relatively stable society, However, times have now changed, and adults are also engaged in a similar search for self-meaning and identity. Both groups, adults and adolescents, are asking the same question, "Who am I?" This, according to Desjarlais and Rackauskas, creates further stress in the adolescent, and results in more confusion overall. In particular, they hypothesise that while adolescents seek stable heterosexual relationships, adults are experimenting with new family relationships and structure; while adolescents must establish values, adults are questioning theirs; while adolescents seek autonomy and independence, adults are questioning religious, political and scientific authorities in greater numbers; while adolescents seek social integration, adults are seeking their niche in society.

It is not surprising that adolescents may be confused,

when their mentors and role models, their parents, are experiencing similar fears and concerns. This need to establish appropriate sex roles and heterosexual relationships is perceived by many researchers as an important element in adolescent development. Erikson (Erikson, 1968) describes adolescent love as a means of defining identity. The adolescent is seen as projecting his diffuse ego-image onto someone else, so that the ego image is reflected and clarified, thus enhancing self awareness. Early adolescence is seen as the first major step from the self-centered world of childhood to the mature adult of thoughtful social relationships, for although adolescents are still very self centred and egocentric, they have very strong desires for gaining social approval. Adolescents must resolve the conflict between identity and role confusion by bringing to bear all that they have learned about themselves in the past and utilising it to give a sense of direction and continuity to their futures, especially in the realms of adult sexual and occupational roles.

Following the same thought pattern as Erikson with his model of developmental stages, Bancroft (1990) details a view of sexual development which sees the child entering adolescence with certain relevant skills such as the capacity for intimacy and trust, which are highly relevant to adolescent sexuality, but which have to be incorporated into the unfolding sexual identity. Using the terms "strands" to indicate stages of development, Bancroft identified three major, principal strands relating to 1) gender identity, 2) sexual response, and 3) capacity for intimate dyadic

relationships. In childhood, these strands develop in a parallel, yet independent sequence. During adolescence, they begin to integrate to form the beginning of the sexual adult. For example, sexual preference or orientation is an aspect of sexual identity that typically begins to organise during early adolescence - the child enters adolescence with the ingredients for sexual orientation rather than a sexual orientation per se - the development of each strand will influence the form the orientation takes.

Although gender identity is usually well organised by the end of childhood (Bancroft, 1990), the turmoil and confusion of adolescence throw even this relatively stable state into temporary disarray. The adolescent now begins to question his or her masculinity or femininity. Accompanying the physical changes of adolescence, none of which occur at exactly the same time as that of peers, come the self doubts and concerns, the questions of self worth, the lowered self confidence and the vulnerability of self esteem. Position in the peer group is uncertain, since much now depends upon "fitting in", the perception of "normalcy". Masculinity and femininity must be renegotiated in adolescent terms, usually with the aid of the old double standard, as gender identity becomes a focal concern of the teen.

Furthermore, Bancroft believes that adolescents, seeking self identity, compare themselves to the prescribed "social scripts" that their peer group provide. How the teenagers react to this stage depend on whether there is confidence and conformity in

their gender, whether there is the capacity for coping with intimacy, and whether the development of sexual desire has been earlier or later in relation to the peer group.

Beyond the physical changes of puberty, the adolescent teens must master various tasks, including knowledge of sexuality and approved sexual roles. While respecting socially accepted values, they must learn to meet their own needs for intimacy and to take on suitable roles. This is why the social activity known as "dating" is such a vital component of the adolescent lifestyle. It helps the adolescent develop social and interpersonal skills with the opposite sex as well as to develop a sense of identity and sexual awareness (Desjarlais & Rackauskas, 1986; Roscoe, Cavanaugh, & Kennedy, 1988; Long, 1989; Coleman & Hendry, 1990).

Dating

Often viewed as an intense, mysterious experience for teens, dating can become both a positive and a negative activity for adolescents: at times both compelling and delightful, yet frightening and troublesome as well (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Kostash, 1987). Formation of dating relationships has long been a concern of middle and later adolescents, and is becoming a growing issue for early adolescents (Herold, 1985; Meikle et al., 1985; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Roscoe, Diana, & Brooks, 1987). It has often been stated that the process of dating allows the

adolescent to acquire new and more mature relations with age mates of both sexes, one of the key developmental tasks assigned to this developmental period (Rice, 1984; Coleman & Hendry, 1990).

Dating refers to the practice by which a boy and a girl agree to meet at a specific time and place, either alone or in a group, for a social engagement (Atwater, 1983; Adams & Gullotta, 1988). Rosenburg and Bensman (1973) claim that dating is an American phenomenon, viewing it as a peculiar ritual, part of a courtship pattern, practised by middle-class youth in the United States. Many other experts agree with this viewpoint (Atwater, 1983; Newman & Newman, 1986; Hotvedt, 1990). In her cultural comparisons of adolescent behaviour, Hotvedt (1990) identifies the length of time allowed by modernised, technological society for the training and establishment of adolescent independence as one variable responsible for this phenomenon. She believes that the co-educational nature of the training institutions provide the adolescent with large populations of age-mates to socialise with, hence increasing the opportunity and likelihood of dating activities.

Functions of Dating

Dating serves a number of useful functions. One is socialising with opposite-sex peers, thus learning the social and interpersonal skills needed to get along with members of the opposite sex. Another function is that of providing recreational

opportunities. Dating is seen as a form of recreation by many teens, who go out on dates to have fun and to have companionship at social functions such as dances. In their research surveying the attitudes and beliefs of Canadian teenagers, Bibby and Posterski (1985) found that the greatest sources of enjoyment for teens across the country to be relationships and music. Over 70% of the teens surveyed maintained that they experienced "a great deal" of enjoyment from friendships, and over 50% responded that the high levels of pleasure came from boy-friend/girlfriend relationships, from dating.

By spending time together and developing a new kind of relationship with a member of the opposite sex, adolescents learn what it is that pleases the other. Boys learn what pleases a girl, what girls like to talk about or do, and how girls react to them. Similarly, girls learn what pleases a boy, what boys like to discuss, and how they react. Thus dating helps the individual develop social and interpersonal skills, as well as a sense of identity and sexual awareness (Erikson, 1968; Desjarlais & Rackauskas, 1986).

Dating also provides opportunities for adolescents to learn about their personalities and needs. These opportunities for intimacy allow them to explore their feelings about being close with others, about the feelings of love, jealousy, guilt and even anger. Dating helps clarify those aspects of their personalities which contribute to or interfere with the achievement of closeness, one of the eight tasks Havighurst set for the adolescent to complete (see Desjarlais & Rackauskas, 1986). As the

experiences are compared and analysed, adolescents are better able to evaluate which relationships are satisfying and which are not, leading to a better understanding of their criteria for mate selection. As well, dating relationships allow the teens to clarify and discuss values about marriage, child rearing, sexuality and life-style expectations prior to marriage.

For many adolescents, dating is also used as a means of achieving status. Within the peer group, dating may be viewed as a sign of social maturity. Successful dating behaviour is highly valued in adolescent society (Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Lees, 1986; Coleman & Hendry, 1990).

Being seen with high status members of the opposite sex does much to enhance the adolescent's image in the eyes of his/her peers (Lees, 1986, Long, 1989; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). It may also be the ticket toward acceptance and membership of a particular group (Bibby & Posterski, 1985) as well as the medium used for the pursuit of independence from parental authority (Erikson, 1968).

Finally, dating provides a context for experimentation with sexual behaviour (Newman & Newman, 1986; Atwater, 1983; (Reiss, 1972). For most adolescents, dating sets the stage for moments of physical intimacy and experimentation, with behaviours ranging from hand holding to sexual intercourse. Estep, Burt and Milligan (cited in Newman and Newman, 1986) agree that within these dating relationships, teens learn how to deal with their sexuality, how to make decisions about sexual

demands, how to handle feelings of vulnerability, and how to provide and experience physical pleasure.

Adolescent Dating Patterns

Not all young people are successful at dating, and some do not date until they have left high school. At the time of his comprehensive Canadian study, Herold (1984) found that one-third of high school males, high school females, and university males and 15% of university females were not dating at the time, while those who were dating, began dating and becoming involved in steady dating relationships at younger ages. Meikle, Peitchinis, and Pearce (1985) also found that teenagers began dating at early ages, with 58% of their high school population beginning dating by age 13. This correlated with the age at which teens became sexually active. Bernard (1961) found that the sexes were already interested in each other as early as the fifth and sixth grades, with dating beginning as early as age ten or eleven. Weston (1980) found the average age of the first date among Saskatchewan adolescents to be 13.8 years. It is generally accepted that the average age for adolescents' dating debut lies between the ages of twelve and a half and fourteen.

Although many variables affect the timing and frequency of dating, it has been suggested that those who start dating earlier may deprive themselves of important same-sex friendships that provide the setting for self-exploration and self-confirmation (Forisha-Kovach,1983; Kostash, 1987). They may,

therefore, be more inclined toward a premature foreclosure on the issue of identity. If friendships facilitate identity formation (Erikson, 1968), then dating and love relationships develop the capacity for intimacy and knowing one another. In mid-adolescence, friendships are used as a mirror of the self, to provide a reflection of "who am I?", while by late adolescence, a more sincere interest is taken in the personality and character of the other. Interest in the opposite sex increases with maturity and changes from a purely social need for interaction to enjoyment of being with one individual.

What characteristics do adolescents seek in a date? This question is asked each term of the students in my Career and Life Management classes. Invariably, the students identify physical appearance as the most important criteria, focusing on both the general (good-looking) to specific such as "nice buns", "muscular build", "great body", even "nice teeth", with personality, sense of humour and dependability and financial resources trailing behind. It is interesting to note that the results of these informal surveys support the documented literature (Newman & Newman, 1986; Forisha-Kovach, 1985; Meikle et al, 1984;Janus, 1981; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). Newman and Newman (1986) clearly state:

> It may reassure some and disconcert others that physical appearance continues to be a primary basis for judging attractiveness. As we said earlier, good looks, a good build (shapely for girls, muscular for boys), and an attractive face are qualities that contribute to a person's desirability for a dating relationship. However, several studies indicate

> that personality characteristics - especially understanding, gentleness, and dependability or loyalty - are more important qualities than appearance in a girl's judgment of a boy. For boys, physical attractiveness appears to be the most important quality used in selecting someone for a date or a longer-lasting relationship. (p.168-169)

Coleman and Hendry (1990) agree, claiming that "in interpersonal relationships, the effect of personal appearance seems crucial." (p. 123). They also claim that physique appears to influence peer group relations, primarily social interaction and choice of friends in dyadic, interpersonal relationships. These facts would hardly create surprise in adults living with or working with adolescents, for it is a common criticism of teens that they are inordinately preoccupied with their appearance, monopolising bathroom facilities, and primping in front of mirrors exhibiting a fascination with clothes, hairstyles and items of adornment. It would appear that in order for teens to find their identities, they must first present images acceptable to their peers. Bibby and Posterski (1985) address this issue in their discussion of the adjustments teens must make to their physically changing bodies:

> But the physical changes have more than immediate biological consequences. Young people find that a particular kind of physical being is emerging, one that is critically graded by a highly physically conscious society that tends to reward the physically attractive with social, occupational, and service privileges, to name just a few. On the other side of the coin, the unattractive find themselves in a disadvantaged position. (p. 53)

The extensive research conducted on the effects of physical appearance has produced highly consistent results, namely that unattractive people are perceived as less intelligent, less popular, less happy, less likely to obtain prestigious jobs, more dishonest, more unkind, more aggressive and more anti-social. It has also been found that people act on these stereotypic impressions, often to the detriment of the physically unattractive (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Staley, 1988; Huston & Alvarez, 1990). These effects are particularly difficult for the unattractive teenager to deal with, becoming, as Bibby and Posterski describe "a personal tragedy".

Television and other forms of mass media are also held accountable for the teenagers' obsession with physical beauty (Brown, Childers, & Waszak, 1990). Content analysis of current standards of attractiveness portrayed on television and in magazines indicate extreme and unrealistic ideals for physical attractiveness, dress, and body thinness, which are often, in turn, linked to the ever-increasing numbers of teens diagnosed with eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa. It is believed by Brown and associates that the media portrayal of physical attractiveness, often reinforced by families and friends, exacerbate the difficulties teens experience in the acceptance of their physical imperfections, and may be directly linked to the excessive use of cosmetics, the increased desire for cosmetic surgery, and even the development of teenage depression and

low self esteem.

Unattractive physical features do not alone create this sense of alienation in teens. The sheer rate of change during puberty can create problems. Considerable strain is created in the teenagers who matured earlier than their peers, or, worse yet, matured later than their peers. Adolescents are often distressed at being "out-of-step" with their peers: being "too" tall or "too" short, "too" thin or "too" fat, "too" overdeveloped or "too" underdeveloped. Being "out-of-synch" with the peer group appears to negatively affect the acceptability of the adolescent as a dating partner, and so adversely influences the initiation and frequency of dating activities (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Coleman & Hendry, 1990).

Going Steady

Up to a third of teenagers are going steady with someone at any given time (Herold, 1984). In a review of research literature spanning fifteen years between 1964 and 1980, Eastwood Atwater (1983) found that "the proportion of teenagers going steady at any given time has remained remarkably stable over time" (p. 183). The practice of "going steady" is of great concern to adults in the helping professions, for it is a peer-approved activity that is highly associated with premarital sexual activity (Meikle et al, 1985; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Samet & Kelly, 1987; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). Reiss (1972) claimed that the intense dyadic relationship of a steady couple encourages the

combination of affection and sex, referring to his earlier research findings that society looks much more favourably upon sexual behaviour when it occurs in a stable, affectionate relationship, his "permissiveness-with-affection" sexual code. Coleman and Hendry (1990) believe that courtship is a dominant activity for many young people, with gender differences prevailing during mid-adolescence. According to these researchers, males, while dating, remain focussed on same-sex peer activities such as athletics, but the girls are more likely to concentrate their involvement in heterosexual social activities, especially going steady. They see these patterns of relationships, in which adolescents narrow down relations to relatively close, stable, intimate relationships as precursors to cohabitation.

Disadvantages of Going Steady

Why is this activity of "going steady" a concern? The most obvious disadvantage is that going steady removes the teen from same-sex peers and group activities that are beneficial for the development of interpersonal skills. Also, because it limits their experience with opposite sex partners, future ramifications are potentially negative, as marital success has been positively associated with the numbers of friends, of both sexes, an individual had before marriage (Atwater, 1983). Furthermore, steady dating may be detrimental because it may create premature emotional involvement unaccompanied by sufficient emotional maturity and may result in a premature crystallisation

of identity, which could then hinder the actualisation of full potential (Amet & Kelly, 1987).

Another key concern is that going steady encourages participation in heavy petting and sexual intercourse, sometimes before the partners are emotionally ready for it. Among adolescents, the standard of permissiveness in a love relationship has replaced the standard of sexual abstinence (Herold, 1984). In an earlier study, Herold and Thomas (1978) found that 80% of males and 74% of females claimed premarital intercourse was acceptable if they felt strong affection for their partner. Meikle and his fellow researchers (1981) found Calgary high school students to be of the similar opinion, with almost 80% believing intercourse was acceptable if the couple were in love. While working on Project Teen Canada, a national survey of 3,600 Canadian teens, Bibby and Posterski (1985) validated the above statistics with their own, again finding that 80% of the teens across Canada agreed that premarital intercourse was acceptable if the couple were in love.

Kappelman (1977) has found that teens are moving into steady relationships at earlier ages. Samet and Kelly (1987) in their study of 480 Israeli adolescents, found a positive link between steady dating and the perception of self-esteem and sex role identity, but expressed concern that "in a period of stress, such as adolescence, steady dating as an accepted and socially desirable norm may bring about peer pressures on those who fail to achieve the norm" (p. 244). The "norm" they are referring to is

that expressed so succinctly by the female subjects involved in the study conducted by Lees in London, England (1986). These young women indicated strong peer expectations and approval of sexual activity, if the girls were involved in a steady relationship. This same perception has been well-documented in North America, in both the United States and Canada (Reiss, 1972; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Meikle et al, 1985; Herold, 1984), although Huston and Alvarez (1990) state it best:

> Early pubertal maturation, frequent dating, and going steady are some factors associated with early initiation of sexual activity and can intensify role expectations - males are often encouraged to engage in sexual activity, whereas females are encouraged to focus on relationships and romantic love . . . 71% of 15-17 year old females, and 47% of 15-17 year old males reported being engaged or going steady at the time of first intercourse. (p. 165)

Adolescent Sexual Behaviour

Sexual behaviour is associated with a multitude of worries and anxieties for teens. It not only is a subject with which they are deeply preoccupied (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Sobal, 1985; Kostash, 1987; Brick, 1989), but also represents a standard of evaluation against which they judge personal success or failure, whether it be a test of their sexuality and attractiveness, or a test of their independence and/or adulthood (Coleman and Hendry, 1990).

An assessment of adolescent sexual behaviour must be

introduced, however, with a strong cautionary note. Methodology alone is a limiting factor, in that all of the evidence available on the sexual behaviour of young people is derived either from interviews or from self-administered questionnaires. Although there has been a tremendous movement towards openness in discussions of sex and sexual behaviour, teens are very self-conscious and aware of the "peer expectations". In particular, for many boys, sexual activity is seen as a "conquest", a matter for boasting and for elevating masculine acceptance (Kirkendall, 1961; Reiss, 1972; Lees, 1986; Davidson, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). Therefore, there exists a strong possibility that reports of male sexual activity may be somewhat exaggerated. On the other hand, for females, sexual activity is not always a source of pride (Lees, 1986; Kostash, 1987; Christopher & Cate, 1988; Coleman & Hendry, 1990), and it may influence adolescent girls to under-report sexual activity. It is very difficult to tell whether or not these biases are operating on the data, so when examining the statistics, it is best to keep some reservations in mind.

Some of the earliest data relating to adolescent sexual activity was provided by Kinsey (Kinsey et al., 1948; 1953). They found that in the United Sates, approximately 10% of females had had sexual intercourse by the age of seventeen. Zelnick and Kantner (1980) provide more recent data from their series of studies conducted throughout the 1970s. Based on three national probability samples of adolescent females between the ages of 15 and 19, living in U.S. metropolitan households in 1971, 1976, and

1979, they showed that teenage sexual behaviour has increased significantly. In 1971, 26.1% of seventeen year old females had had sexual intercourse, in 1976, this figure had risen to 42.9%, and by 1979, 48.5% of seventeen year olds were sexually experienced. Two noteworthy items in this study were the average ages of first intercourse (16.6 in 1971; 16.3 in 1976; 16.4 in 1979) and the fact that the never-married group accounted for almost all of the increase. Consequently, the authors concluded that the increases in frequency of coitus for females were occuring at all age levels, rather than among the very young.

Murstein, Chalpin, Heard and Vyse (1989) compared the behaviour and attitudes of college students in a small American college over a thirteen year period. Three sets of data were compiled, in 1974, 1979, and in 1986. These researchers found a significant increase in reported sexual activity between 1974 and 1979, but by the year 1986, reported sexual behaviour had returned to that of the 1974 level. It was suggested that this trend towards reversal of sexual behaviour could be a result of the publicity and fear of sexually transmitted diseases, namely herpes.

Several studies conducted in Canada provide valuable data regarding adolescent sexual behaviour. Meikle and his associates (1985), working among Calgary high school students, found that 16.6% of the students surveyed claimed to have had sexual intercourse by the age of thirteen, 23.8% were sexually active by age 14, 40% by age sixteen, and 48.9% by age seventeen. As the

age increased, the proportion of sexually experienced adolescents also rose, so that among the eighteen year olds, 66.7% had experienced coitus. Interestingly, while the frequency of intercourse increased with age, it did not do so uniformly. There was a significantly larger increase between fifteen and sixteen years of age (13.6%), rising to 17.8% between seventeen and eighteen. This lead the authors to surmise that adolescents were more likely to begin engaging in intercourse between these age periods. On a final note regarding this interesting study is the examination of the relationship between dating and coitus. By comparing the age at which dating began among the sexually experienced and the sexually inexperienced, Meikle and his associates confirmed that the age of initial sexual experience was related to the age at which dating began, namely that those who begin dating early in their adolescence are also more likely to be sexually experienced earlier.

Edward Herold, a prominent Canadian researcher and educator at University of Guelph, conducted a study in 1982 among Ontario university students. He found that 60% of the males and 52% of the females surveyed had experienced intercourse (Herold, 1984). He also reported a Saskatchewan survey conducted in 1979 and 1980 by Weston for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health which found that 35% of the fifteen to seventeen olds and 61% of the eighteen and nineteen year olds indicated they had experienced intercourse.

Alan King and his associates, (King, Beazley, Warren,

Hankins, Robertson, & Radford, 1988) in a massive survey of over 38,000 Canadian youth aged 11 to 21, found that of the adolescents surveyed, 31% of the males and 21% of the females were sexually active by age fourteen. Almost half of the grade elevens surveyed had had sexual intercourse at least once (47.5%), with 40% of the 16 year olds and 53% of the 17 year olds reporting sexual experience. In addition, 26% of the grade nine respondents had been sexually active, and of the youngest group, the grade seven participants, at least 12% of the males and 8% of the females had experienced sexual intercourse at least once.

Although the findings of King and his associates are consistent with other studies in both Canada and the United States, slightly lower figures were found by Varnhagen, Svenson, Godin, and Salmon (1991) in their survey of grade eleven students in the Edmonton region. Of the one hundred and ninety nine students surveyed, 41% indicated they had experienced sexual intercourse. Perhaps there is a downward trend in the sexual activity among the Canadian youth in Alberta.

Other Sexual Behavior

Whether or not sexual intercourse is part of a relationship, there is no doubt that sexual intimacy is an important, enjoyable, and common element in adolescent dating. Even adolescents who do not approve of intercourse before marriage will experiment with a range of sexual activities that may result in orgasms, such as petting, whether above or below the waist. In the King study,

(King et al, 1988), 67% of the grade nine respondents and 82% of those in grade eleven had engaged in light petting (petting above the waist), while 51% grade nines and 74% grade elevens had participated in petting above the waist. In Saskatchewan, Weston (1980) found that three-quarters of 15 to 19 year olds had engaged in light petting, with the average age of beginning this activity being 14 years, 8 months. Sixty-three percent had experienced heavy petting, with 15 being the average age at which heavy petting first occurred. Bibby and Posterski (1985) found similar results when they asked their sample about appropriate physical behaviour on dates. A total of 84% of those surveyed believed petting was acceptable between dating partners who like each other, and half of the Canadian teens surveyed felt that intercourse was appropriate after a few dates if a couple liked each other, while 80% believed sexual relations were acceptable if the couple loved each other.

Although there is general acceptance of petting among young people, there is also considerable anxiety about it, especially among younger adolescents. Young people may be confused about what is actually involved in petting and whether or not their petting behaviour is acceptable. Most teens proceed from lighter to more intimate types of physical behaviour in a fairly standard sequence: holding hands, kissing, necking, light petting, heavy petting, and finally, sexual intercourse (Masserman & Uribe, 1989). Consequently, it is easy to see the relationship that exists between dating, going steady and sexual intimacy.

Factors Associated with Adolescent Sexual Behaviour

There exists tremendous variability among adolescents in terms of sexual experience. Depending on the particular study, numbers of adolescents involved in premarital sexual activity can vary from 40% to as high as 75%, depending on the age of the subjects, the location of the study, the date of the study, the culture assessed by the study, as well as racial and socioeconomic status of subjects in the study (Forisha-Kovach, 1983).

Among the more significant correlates of premarital sexual behaviour are race, religiosity, gender, age, physical attractiveness, parental values and relationships, peer values, drug usage, mass media messages, intelligence and educational aspirations, and liberality.

Cultural/Racial Effects

It is noted in much of the literature, since most of the research is conducted in the United States, that blacks report a higher incidence of premarital coitus than whites (Singh, 1980; Rice, 1987; Forrest, 1990). Other cultures also produce different results, and caution should be used in interpretations and generalisations. In a comparison of six countries including the United States and Canada, Forrest (1990) found that the proportions of teens who have had intercourse are lower at all age levels in Canada, with the median age for sexual debut at 19

in Canada, as compared to 17 in Sweden, and 18 for the other countries, including the United States.

Religiosity

Religiosity and a lower level of sexual permissiveness go together. An individual who participates in church life regularly tends to be more conservative in sexual behaviour and more likely to abstain from premarital sex (Herold, 1984; Juhasz & Sonnenshein-Schneider, 1980; Rice, 1987). As well, should this individual engage in premarital sex, the likelihood of guilt dominating the emotional aftermath is very great. As might also be expected, the more religious the individual, the more important were the opinions of others such as parents, peers, and religious leaders.

Age

Age at first intercourse is a very significant variable, in that the younger an individual is at first sexual intercourse, the more permissive the adolescent tends to be in subsequent relationships than those who report older ages at first intercourse (Singh, 1980; Rice, 1987). Hofferth (1990) also found that 40% of the adolescents had their second sexual encounter within one month of the initial experience, often without using contraceptive measures. Closely related to this variable is that of physical attractiveness. As was discussed earlier, dating acceptability is closely related to appearance and physical development. The

sooner an individual begins to date, the greater the likelihood of sexual intimacy, and earlier physical maturation, combined with physical attractiveness tends to accelerate this entire process of dating, going steady, and sexual intercourse (Newcomer, Udry, & Cameron, 1983; Rice, 1987; Downs, 1990; Huston & Alvarez, 1990).

Gender Issues

Gender issues, in particular the double standard, are still a big factor in teenage sexual activity. Females are both expected to, and tend to be less permissive than males. Kostash (1987) reiterating the comments of teenage women she interviewed, wrote, " *Guys* can fool around with a bunch of girls at once, but for a girl it's different. She looks, you know, sluttish" (p. 94). Continuing on, Kostash emphasises "it is in public that the codes of the sexual double standard are enforced. Her attachment must be seen to be monogamous, her affection demonstrable and unconditional . . ." (p. 99).

Females also tend to place greater emphasis on the affective quality of the relationship than on the physical aspect. In their study of five hundred 13 to 19 year olds, Juhasz and Sonnenshein-Schneider (1987) found that "males were high on self-enhancement through sexual intercourse, and hence were more oriented toward sexual impulse gratification" (p. 584), while females were more concerned about the relationship aspects of sexual behaviour. Females are still considered to be the

"gatekeepers", those who set limits on sexual activity (Singh, 1980; Christopher & Cate, 1985; Herold, 1984). Citing a study conducted in 1977 by Peplau, Herold focussed on the female's responsibility to control the sexual behaviour in the relationship. It was found that "in every case where a male dated a partner who was sexually experienced that couple engaged in intercourse" (p. 16). However, if a virginal female dated an experienced male, one-third of the couples studied refrained from sexual intercourse.

Liberalism

A high level of social liberalism is also correlated with a high level of sexual permissiveness. For example, those who favour careers for women and who are more egalitarian in their expectations of male/female roles tend to be more sexually permissive than those who are less liberal. Fingerman (1989) wrote that "if parents today maintain an egalitarian view of the female sex role, they are less likely to encourage stereotypically feminine behaviour in their daughters, including the trait of sexual reticence" (p. 3). McCormick, Izzo, & Folick (1985) found that high school students who were pro-feminist became significantly more sexually intimate with their dates than did high school students who were sex role traditional. Liberal sexual attitudes became associated with liberal attitudes in general.

A study which examined teenage sexual behaviour of children of working mothers, found that the females whose

mothers worked outside the home had a greater tendency to engage in sexual relations than did those who lived with non-working mothers. The researchers attributed some of this to the teens' greater independence and lack of supervision which unavoidably occurred as a result of the maternal employment (Hanson, O'Connor, Jones, & Blocker, 1981). The results of the Hanson study, that of reduced supervision could be related to other documented data that reveals first intercourse usually occurred in the teens' homes (Herold, 1985; Rice, 1987).

Drug Use

Another correlate of adolescent sexual behaviour is that of drug usage. In their conclusions following three separate studies conducted thirteen years apart on the same campus, Murstein, Chalpin, Heard, and Vyse (1989) found that nonvirginity was associated with heavier use of drugs and alcohol than was virginity. As well, they revealed that the continuum of drug use was significantly associated with a lack of commitment to the individual's most recent sex partner. Masserman and Uribe (1989) estimate that of every ten adolescents, 5-7 males and 3-5 females will have experimented with illegal substances ranging from alcohol to psychedelics such as marijuana, LSD or PCB to narcotics such as cocaine and opiates. Although these illegal substances diminish libidinal potency, use of these is associated with an increase in sexual activity in that there is a diminution of sexual restraints.

Intelligence/Educational Goals

A rather complex relationship exists between intelligence and sexual decision making. According to Juhasz and Sonnenshein-Schneider (1987), the more intelligent the adolescent, the less likely intercourse will be viewed as hedonistic self-gratification, and the greater the likelihood that sexual activity would be determined by autonomous contemplation, and that precautions would be taken to ensure the absence of unwanted consequences such as pregnancy. Miller and Sneesby (1988) found that all of the variables they examined, which reflected stronger educational background or educational interest on the part of the adolescent, were negatively related to adolescent sexuality. In other words, as the teenager's interest and commitment to educational pursuits increased, the likelihood of participation in premarital, teenage sex decreased. However, they expressed a cautionary note regarding the direction of effects, in spite of the clear and consistent patterns evidenced through their research. Although they found that low educational aspirations and poor academic performance lead to early sexual involvement, they also could not rule out the possibility of reversed effect: that early sexual activity might have lead to reduced educational plans and achievement.

Olson (Miller & Olson, 1985), also found that sexual abstinence was widely accepted and practised among students of higher academic achievement in his work with the Colorado's Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention program. He found that the

majority of females in his sample of 741, who described themselves as receiving grades above 50%, also reported sexual abstinence, with the majority of those students achieving below that level reporting sexual involvement. For males, the pattern was similar, except that significantly greater levels of males, in the lower achievement category (<50%) claimed to be sexually active (75% of the males as compared to 50% of the females).

Parental Influences

Parent/Teen Relationships

During adolescence, the relationships between teenager and parents becomes an arena for the emergence of the self, and the ensuing confrontation between parent and teen can be particularly exhausting for all parties concerned. Parents may experience rejection. They may view their child as a stranger, an intruder, a rival: someone who argues about curfews, who criticises the parents' lifestyle, who prefers spending time with friends or alone in a room, rather than with the family or who turns to others for consolation and intimacy.

To the teenager, parents become infallible, inconsistent, and unreasonable. They see adults as individuals who mismanage money, time and relationships, but who have a great deal of advice, usually unwanted. There occur long stretches in adolescence when adolescents see nothing right about their parents, yet they still need them very much. Under all of the

outward turmoil, though, lies the unspoken question, "Do you still love me?" As Staley (1988) puts it so well, "friendships and romantic relationships come and go, but the parent-child relationship is a constant in the teenagers' life. In spite of all the tensions, it provides the anchor of stability" (p. 105).

Although conflicts between parents and teens are common during adolescence, and parents despair of surviving the teenage years, especially during the earlier years of adolescence, there is widespread agreement among researchers that parental influence continues to be primary throughout adolescence (Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Rice, 1987; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). This statement, however, needs to be qualified.

The quality of the relationship between adolescents and their parents is a primary variable in determining the relative influence of parents and peers. In other words, the strength of the peer group as a referent group for adolescents will be influenced by the degree to which parents have built and maintained ties as significant others to their children. Thus we would expect that the more parents are perceived as a source of support and inductive control, the less peers will be seen as a significant referent group for important decision making by the adolescent (Barnes, Farrell, & Windle, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1990; Forisha-Kovach, 1983).

Furthermore, it has also been established in the literature that since teens tend to associate with "like-minded others" who share their values and attitudes, it is more likely that peers will

agree with, and even reflect parental values (Bloom, 1990; Schinke, et al, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1990; Peterson & Leigh, 1990).

Desjarlais and Rackauskas (1986), in their assessment of parent/peer influences in the lives of adolescents, claim that as adolescents move towards independence away from parental authority, they also need the support and encouragement of their parents, thus establishing a bipolar relationship. They also agree with the overlap in the values of parent and peer group, although they caution that the specific situation in question may determine who has the greater influence. Other researchers agree, with the most common consensus being that parental influence is greatest over long-term, major ethical or moral decisions, while peer groups have greater influence in social domains or in areas related to daily living, such as friendships, style of dress, curfew, and even sleep (Adams & Gullotta, 1983; Forisha-Kovach, 1983, Desjarlais & Rackauskas, 1986; Huston & Alvarez, 1990).

Although it has been established that parental influences generally remain significant in the lives of the adolescent, the level of parental influence (and conversely, peer influence) is affected by the salience of the projected values, parenting styles, level of conflict in the family home, and parental agreement (Janus, 1981; Forisha-Kovach, 1983).

Parents do much, however, to create confusion in their teenagers, by sending ambivalent messages (Hotvedt, 1990; Trost, 1990). A mother, in conversation with her daughter, may state,

"Don't have sex now, . . .but, if you do, be careful." Another example of this ambivalence is the situation that is so common, where the mother takes the daughter to get a prescription for birth control without telling the father. Another yet, when parents criticise the immorality of teenage sexual behaviour, yet spend hours watching X-rated movies on their cable television. From situations such as these, teens, already confused, learn that what parents don't know, won't hurt them. Bell (1972), in his discussion of parent/child conflict in sexual values, claims that although there is a trend toward a more liberal view of sexual behaviour in general, "parents will continue to hold to traditional values, and assume that their child is conforming to those values unless his actions force them to to see otherwise". (p. 30) The adolescents, on the other hand, will continue to develop their own modified values, and will allow their parents to continue with their assumptions. The analogy forwarded by Bell is that "the conflict about premarital sex will continue to be characterised by the parent's playing ostrich and burying his head in the sand, and the youth's efforts to keep the sand from blowing away" (p.31). Consequently, we have adolescents seeking birth control, medical advice, and health services from health officials without seeking parental permission.

Parental Values/Attitudes

Societal values and attitudes have been changing toward greater liberalism, and according to Bibby and Posterski (1985),

there exist significant parallells between the attitudes of the teens in Canada, and the attitudes of adults toward sexual behaviours such as whether premarital sex was acceptable if two people loved each other, whether birth control information should be available upon demand to teens who want it, and whether rape victims should be entitled to legal abortions. It was noteworthy, in the same study, that adults were significantly more tolerant of extra-marital sexual activity than were teens (21% as compared to 12%).

Parental Marital Status

Several researchers also found that teenagers from single parent families were more likely to engage in premarital sexual activity(Stern, Northman, & Van Slynck, 1984; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Elliot & Morse, 1985). Elliot and Morse reflected that social learning could have been a factor, in that observations made by the teenager of the frequency and nature of the parent's dating patterns, as well as the nature and frequency of the parent's coital patterns would have a liberalising effect on the adolescent's sexual behaviour. They believed that the adolescent would be more agreeable to premarital sexual activity, if he/she were exposed to such through parental modelling.

Consistently, one of the strongest predictors of adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour is the marital status of the parents. Adolescents living with both parents have the least permissive attitudes toward premarital sex, followed by those

living with a parent who has remarried. (Miller, Higginson, Olson, & Wallace, as cited by Olson, 1990). Furthermore, parental influence continues beyond the sole realm of marital status. Olson also found in related studies, that the greater the parental interest or involvement in the teenager's achievements, be they academic achievements or personal achievements such as sports, music, dance, etc., the greater the likelihood teens would report sexual abstinence. Teens who believe their parents are interested in them, are twice as likely as those who do not perceive parental interest to refuse participation in premarital sexual behaviour.

Parental Discipline

Parental discipline also had a significant effect on the sexual behaviour of adolescents. Teenagers who report that their parental discipline was "not strict at all" were more than twice as likely to engage in sexual intercourse than adolescents who report moderate strictness of parental rules. However, teenagers who reported their parents as "extremely strict" were slightly more likely to be involved in sexual intercourse than those reporting moderate discipline (Janus, 1981; Olson, 1990; Peterson & Leigh, 1990).

Media Influences

The mass media has been accused of promoting

unrestricted sexual permissiveness, unrealistic romantic expectations, and adversely influencing the cognitive, affective, social, and personal aspects of youth (Bloom, 1990; Bell, 1972; Huston & Alvarez, 1990; Kappelman, 1977; Schlesinger, 1977; Forrest, 1990). Huston and Alvarez (1990) claim that:

> as children move through early adolescence, parental influence diminishes somewhat and peer influence increases. Peers and television are particularly important in socialising sex-typed behaviour and emotional expression. Peers convey clear attitudes about appropriate and inappropriate social behaviour. Entertainment television is full of messages about social relationships, friendship, enmity, emotional expression, and sexuality. The young adults on television and same-age peers may seem to an early adolescent to be more appropriate models and sources of standards for social interaction than parents and older adults. Moreover, sexual maturation may be a cue to adopt perceived adolescent roles learned before adolescence from such sources as television and movies." (p. 174)

Most cruitical attention has focussed on television as the mass medium of greatest concern because of its pervasive popularity with the young. In their discussion of television and its effects on adolescent sexuality, Brown, Childers and Waszak (1990) claim that "many adolescents today have more access to their television sets than they do to their parents" (p. 63). They claim that average American teens spend approximately twelve hours a week with their parents, most of this at meal times, and often, according to 67% of the teens surveyed, meals which are eaten in front of the television set.

When assessing the influence of television on the sexual attitudes and behaviours of youth today, we must also be mindful of the unique dimensions of learning that arise when the topic is sex and sexuality. Because of the reticence of parents, schools, and churches (our traditional, primary information and modelling sources) in addressing this topic, teens look to peers who often are as misinformed, for information and advice, or base their actions on the behaviour modelled on the screen. As Brown, Childers, and Waszak (1990) state: "Television is considered safe in that it does not laugh at ignorance nor inexperience" (p. 63). The danger lies in the observational learning (in the modelling of observed television behaviours), when we consider the limited cognitive and moral functioning of most younger adolescents.

Many researchers express concern over the negative effects of the mass media on adolescent sexuality. Kappelman (1977) believes that the strong ambience of sexual "come-on's" in advertisements such as toothpaste ads, car and beer commercials, and even novel and record covers, coupled with the promotion of sex in entertainment television and theatre has created a society the is composed of "sexual consumers".

Concerns are expressed that because of this "sexual saturation" in the media, adolescent sexual activity is preceding sexual knowledge and sophistication. Adolescents may be lead to believe that the images portrayed on the screen, are normative standards for behaviour. As Adams and Gullotta (1983) state, "if we see it on television, we tend to believe it" (p. 298). Although

Roberts (1977) argues that "by and large, the image created by the media is not matched by reality" (p.35), Schlesinger (1977) argues that the media exploits and presents a narrow, distorted view of sex which permeates our society today in an unhealthy manner.

Trost (1990) agrees, claiming that the mass media is the most powerful of influences in society. What is printed, what is said on the radio, and what is shown on television are all "truths", especially when discussed and combined with the social reality of the peer group. Consequently, when sexual intercourse is shown or hinted at in popular television shows, by heros we identify with, the perceived message is that it is acceptable to have sex, even in casual relationships. Add to this the fact that few, if any, hers use contraceptive devices, and the hypocritical nature of society is exposed to the adolescent. Indeed, it is very difficult for the teen to obey the parent who spouts restrictive norms, while sitting in the living room, enjoying the sexual permissiveness of the current sitcoms prevalent on the screen today.

The concerns expressed by researchers about the effects of mass media messages on the youth of today are very valid. There is, however, good news. Many of the television and radio talk shows do cover topics related to sexuality with increasing frequency, often presenting factual information and/or references to sources of care in the process. Newspapers and magazines have also begun to devote more space to this area through

feature articles that are well documented and researched (Forrest, 1990).

Peer Group Influences

Friendship is important throughout life, but at no time is the need as desperate as during adolescence. As early adolescents begin to pull away from their parents, they need another anchor, a place of comfort. As long as they have friends, they are not alone in the shaky transition from dependence to independence. While parents symbolise authority, the peer group symbolises acceptance. Selverstone (1989) describes this as a time of "de-satellization", where the teens who have left the orbit of their parents in search for autonomy, realise total autonomy is unrealistic, and so "re-satellize" around a peer group, remaining within its orbit until they has achieved autonomy as independent adults.

Although friends help teens become independent from their parents, they exert a new kind of authority - conformity. The need to be "cool" and not a "nerd" places strong pressures on both sexes. Even the adolescent who chooses not to conform to peer expectations finds himself under incredible pressure. He must constantly make choices, and this takes significantly more energy than most adults realise. In schools, the cliques dictate what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.

This strong need to be part of a peer group is stimulated

by the adolescent's lack of confidence and the need for reassurance outside the home (Desjarlais & Rackauskas, 1986; Newman & Newman, 1986; Kostash, 1987; Staley, 1988; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). This, in turn, heightens the need to conform to the group standards, and becomes an important factor in the maintenance of emotional security, development of social attitudes and behaviour, as well as definition of identity. It can also intensify adverse emotional development and be a powerful influence on maladaptive behaviour.

Pearl, Bryan and Herzog (1990), in their review of existing literature on this topic, reiterate several interesting facts about peer pressure: Peer pressure to engage in misconduct is reported to occur less frequently than other forms of peer pressure, appears to be less frequently successful than peer pressure on other domains of behaviour, and is definitely not the only cause of misconduct. However, most teens, will at some point, be encouraged to acquiesce to undesirable peer pressure. They claimed that this would be a particularly difficult situation for the female teen, who would perceive the consequences of both agreeing or refusing the request in a more negative manner than the males. Since it was ascertained that both sexes disapproved more of girl's misconduct than that of a male, she would be judged more harshly if she were to acquiesce to the demand. Conversely, since maintenance of friendships and peer acceptance are particularly important to female adolescents, they would be more inclined to believe that the friendship would be placed in

jeopardy were they to refuse the request.

How does this relate to sexual behaviour? Selverstone (1989) believes that sexual behaviour, as well as other age-related and maturity-dependent behaviours such as drinking alcohol, driving vehicles, and making school and career decisions, are directly affected by the re-satellization of the adolescent into the orbit of the peer group. Peer standards appear to be of particular importance to adolescents in establishing their own sexual standards of behaviour (Collins, 1974; Shah and Zelnick, 1981; Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Herold, 1985; Juhasz & Sonnenshein-Schneider, 1987; Rice, 1987). Huston and Alvarez (1990) write that "peers and television are particularly important in socialising sex-typed behaviour and emotional expression. Peers convey clear attitudes about appropriate and inappropriate social behaviour" (p. 174). Newman and Newman (1986) expressed concern about the peer influence on teens, claiming that adolescents can feel pressured into greater degrees of sexual intimacy than they find genuinely comfortable and which may increase their feelings of vulnerability. Roberts (1977) agrees, claiming that peer pressure has made sex an obligation for young people just to keep up with the crowd. Kostash (1987) claims that "idiosyncrasy is rewarded by humiliation and exclusion" (p. 176).

Lees (1986), in her study of 15-16 year old girls in England, found that her subjects were inordinately concerned about their sexual reputation. Regardless of social class, girls

were defined in terms of their sexuality, whether they were "flighty", "tartish", "cheap girls", (slags) or whether they were "nice", "respectable", "marriageable", "one-man girls". A vicious circle was portrayed, where a girl's reputation was based predominantly on her assumed sexual availability, and where language was used as the controlling element. Lees believed that the importance of a girl's reputation and the double standard of sexual morality was illustrated best by the term "slag" - a negative label addressed to the teenage girl who "slept around promiscuously". However, a teenage girl could also be given this derogatory label, even if it had no relationship to her actual sexual behaviour, but rather, if she did not conform to expected criteria, if she dressed, talked, or behaved in a certain manner which the group disapproved of. The only constraint on the use of this label appeared to be in its application to the girl who had a steady boyfriend.

Although Lees' study was conducted in England, and cautions have been advised in generalising such results to other adolescents, it is generally accepted that similar scenarios exist in Canada, in our local high schools. Kostash (1987), in her Canadian study, found that this was the case. She noted that it was the females who policed each other and ensured conformity:

> if the 'double standard' of sexual morality is still operative in adolescent sexual negotiations, it is in part due to the fact that girls police each other: they monitor each other's behaviour with a pitiless scrutiny and have the power, within their own cliques, to expel or exclude those who

> have broken the sexual code. In spite of their parents' worst dreams, this is not a sexual culture in which "anything goes"; the line drawn between 'good' and 'bad' girls may not be drawn precisely where adults would wish it to be, but it is drawn." (p. 186).

The Canadian girl's reputation is also based on her assumed sexual availability. The derogatory terms used to control sexual behaviour most often are not "slag", but "slut" or "sleaze", while strong acceptance of male sexual prowess continues to be prevalent (Roberts, 1977; Kostash, 1987; Davidson, 1990; Trost, 1990). Kostash (1987) defines *slut* as "a girl who goes to bed with a guy she has no feelings for" (p. 187). However, she notes that it is not a question of the boy's feelings since it is generally assumed that boys will have sex with anybody who lets them. The sex act appears to have an inherent value in the male culture which is still perpetuated today. Furthermore, Kostash claims that "the way to have a sex life, then, without being designated a slut, is to make love only with someone you are going out with, someone with whom it is generally acknowledged you are in a relationship. . ." (p.187).

Thus, several interesting dilemmas appear for the adolescent female. She assumes that the peer group expects and approves of sexual activity within a caring relationship, but she must be careful not to move from one relationship to another too quickly. If she acquiesces to her young man's pressures to have sex, which his peer group expects of him (Roberts, 1977; Davidson, 1990; Bloom, 1990), he may drop her and/or talk about

her to his friends, and so destroy her reputation. If she does not have sex with him, he may still drop her, and/or still talk about her, telling untrue tales that could still harm her reputation and leave her without a boyfriend, which also would lower her status in the eyes of her peers. Furthermore, if she anticipates sexual intercourse and takes contraceptive precautions, she may be accused of being "promiscuous" (Kostash, 1987; Trost, 1990). Sex is acceptable if she is in love.

Kirkendall (1961) expressed concern about the consequences of this sexual manipulation. He claimed the youth subculture placed a high value on sexual prowess as evidence of masculine achievement, with the result that a very narrow line was drawn between aggressiveness on the part of the male seeking sexual satisfaction and exploitation. The cultural demands placed on the teen couple encourage males to prove masculinity through sexual conquests, while demanding of young females that they prove their desirability and femininity through the successful attainment of a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship. Although his research was conducted almost thirty years ago, Kirkendall's perceptions(1961) still are valid today and are largely supported by more recent researchers such as Kostash (1987). Kirkendall writes:

> When these pressures combine in the persons of a boy and a girl, in an unsupervised dating relationship, the outcome can be predicted. The situation, to put it bluntly, is that the girl wants a boy, and the boy wants sex. So in order to get the boy the girl provides (or offers) him sex hoping

> that this will entice him into a permanent association, or he seeks it aggressively to prove, to himself at least, that he is a man. So long as these confusions and pressures exist, sex is certain to be used more exploitively than would otherwise be the case. So long as false values are built about sex, marriage and mate selection, so long as youths are sexually overstimulated, or encouraged to contract relationships for which they are unready, just so long will sex be used exploitively. (p. 237-238).

Twenty-five years later, Kostash (1987), in her candid portrayal of adolescent females from large Canadian urban centres, also writes about this exploitiveness that prevails in adolescent sexual behaviours:

> Women use it [sex] as an instrument of negotiation to get what they *really* want: love. Similarly, men will use any means at their disposal, including protestations of love and gestures of affection, to get as much sex as possible. This is a somewhat bleak view of heterosexual courtship, but obviously the point can be made that, where femaleness is primarily valued as an object of carnal possession, a girl must be very subtle to hold out always the *possibility* of such possession without in fact indulging it; once he's "had" her, the theory goes, a man need no longer court her, let alone love her. (p. 96)

Another related issue is the perception of teens that "everyone is having sex", and thus, that participation in sexual behaviour is the expected norm. Herold (1984), in his analysis of Canadian youth, claimed that "teens' perceptions of sexual experiences among their age group continue to be inaccurate (p. 18). When he asked his respondents to indicate the percentage of

high school students they thought would experience sexual intercourse before leaving high school, he found that both sexes assumed greater sexual activity on the part of males than females, which reflected the common stereotype of males in our society. He also found the sexually experienced teens gave considerably higher estimates of sexual activity than did the inexperienced group, with 70% of the experienced males predicting that more than 40% of males would experience sexual intercourse before leaving high school, as compared to 30% of the inexperienced. Among females, about twice as many sexually experienced teens (58%) as inexperienced (33%) predicted that 40% of females would experience intercourse before leaving high school.

Herold (1984) offers several plausible explanations for these statistics. One reason forwarded is that young people tend to associate with others of similar values and attitudes, (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Kostash, 1987; Schinke, McAlister, Orlandi, & Botvin, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1990) so that those who experience premarital sex are likely to associate with others of similar experiences, thus reinforcing their belief that almost everyone is involved sexually. As well, adolescents are likely to share their sexual experience with others only if they believe the others will be supportive. It is unlikely that an adolescent will reveal sexual behaviours to a parent or to a peer if he/she anticipates adamant disapproval.

Trost (1990) claims that it is not surprising that teenagers

as well as adults overestimate the "promiscuity" among adolescents, referring to this inaccuracy as "a misperception of the normality in a statistical sense". People thought that "all teenagers": had a lot of sex. Studies showed they did not. However, he cautions:

> It is important to know what we perceive as real is real in its consequences; it does not matter if the perceptions are wrong, because people act in accordance with their perceptions and not in accordance with the "objective" facts. . .In cases like this, the perceived normality easily creates a feeling of being abnormal if one is not behaving in accordance with normality - thus the normality becomes a received social norm to behave as normals do. A vicious circle occurs, and people obey the norms, or more commonly, they pretend to do so. (pp. 176-177)

In summation, we find that peer influence is significant for adolescent sexual behaviour. Although we have focussed on the negative aspects of conformity, exploitation and inaccuracies of perceived norms, it is imperative that we also look to the positive. Just as adolescents fear that they will be neglected or rejected by their peers, so adults fear that adolescents will be overly influenced by their peers. However, research is providing statistical evidence that although adolescents spend more time with peers than they did as children, and though peer-group loyalty may increase as adolescents grow older, peers generally are supportive of parental values (Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Newman & Newman, 1986; Coleman & Hendry, 1990; Schinke et al, 1990).

Costs of Non-marital Coitus

As Roberts (1977) stated, society focusses on adolescent sexual behaviour when the unfortunate consequences such as pregnancy, abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases are visible. Certainly there are growing costs of non-marital coitus for the youth of today, as well as for society as a whole. Some of the ramifications of teenage sexual behaviour, include pregnancy, unplanned parenthood, over-involvement, sexual exploitation, sexually transmitted diseases, and greater health risks (Chilman, 1984; Kostash, 1987). The "perceived invulnerability" of youth (Herold, 1984; Meikle et al, 1985; Hauser, Viegra, Jacobson, & Wertlieb, 1985; King et al, 1988) is often cited as a major factor in the lack of contraceptive use among adolescents. Kostash (1987) believes that teenagers' uncertainties and inhibitions play a large part in their reluctance to use contraception, where again the peer group frowns on the girl who protects herself. She writes, "The only acceptable attitude to sexual intercourse is to be in love, to be so overwhelmed by your own feeling and the imperatives of desire, that, in spite of your best intentions, you go all the way. Later, maybe, you can pick up the pill. . ." (p. 191). Thus, many adolescents participate in unprotected sexual intercourse, resulting in increased pregnancies, increased sexually transmitted diseases, and increased medical and social costs.

In Canada, it was estimated in 1980, that over one thousand teens became pregnant every week (Timson, 1980) as

compared to three thousand teens per day in the United States (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1981). In 1983, more than 16,500 babies were born in Canada to single mothers aged fifteen to nineteen (Kostash, 1987). The costs are formidable: the Centre for Populations Options in Washington, D.C. estimates that teen pregnancies cost the state and federal governments an estimated 16.7 billion dollars in welfare payouts in 1985 (Sherman et al, 1986); the State of Colorado alone spent more than two hundred million dollars on services and support for pregnant and parenting teens in 1988 (Governor's Initiative on Teen Pregnancy, 1988); while in Alberta, Bonham and associates (Bonham, Clark, O'Malley, Nicholson, Ready, & Smith, 1987) calculated that if half of the adolescent parents required social assistance, the cost to the province would exceed eight and a half million dollars.

As Johnson (1974) so clearly revealed, poverty is strongly associated with teen pregnancy, initially because 90% of pregnant teens choose to keep their children (Daniel, 1983), and because of limited skill development and career opportunities resulting from the truncated educational opportunities. The impact of an unwanted pregnancy on a young teenager's life can be overwhelming, and the consequences are often documented in moralistic overtones, especially the emotional debate over sex education in the school systems.

Figures and statistics such as those given above, have incredible shock value, and create immediate concern in the listener. Taken alone, it is not difficult to conclude that there is,

indeed, a sexual immorality among our youth, that teenagers are promiscuous and "out-of-control", and that the sex education programs in the school are ineffective. However, when one considers the increased numbers of adolescents in the population as a whole, and the overall medical and support costs for the entire population, then perspective returns and rational thought prevails.

Statistics, as provided in the research literature, suggest that adolescent sexual activity was/is increasing. However, if we accept the cautionary advice given by Coleman and Hendry (1990) about the biases which may have affected the reporting of respondents, and assume greater honesty in the responses of the more recent respondents resulting from changes in societal attitudes towards sexual behaviour, then perhaps, there has not been a "sexual revolution" after all, rather, an increased tolerance and openness towards the activity.

Was there a sexual revolution?

As we review the research dealing with adolescent sexual behaviour and the various correlates thereof, it requires little effort on our behalf to accept the argument of a "sexual revolution", a revolution which is disregarding traditional sexual morality in favour of sexual freedom and permissive, even promiscuous behaviour.

Although many adults fear that this "sexual revolution" has resulted in teen promiscuity, researchers tend to disagree.

Many believe, as Bibby and Posterski (1985) claim, that there may not ever have been a sexual revolution. Instead, they question whether the visibility, rather than the frequency of teen sexual behaviour may not be the issue. Roberts (1977) makes a similar point by reflecting that public acknowledgement of teen sex focusses on its unfortunate consequences, that is, teenage pregnancy, teenage abortions, and teenage parenting. Kostash (1987) believes that "it is becoming more and more untenable to argue that anything very revolutionary has happened to the adolescent experience of sexuality" adding that "distressingly little has changed for today's teenage girls" (p. 196). Bibby and Posterski (1985) write:

> accepting the inclination of our institutions to instil in adolescents adult values and norms, it is difficult to envision that a "sexual revolution" could take place almost overnight. There is obviously a big difference between noting that groupings within the population are departing from widely held norms and asserting that such departures characterise the population as a whole. Keeping in mind the penchant of the media to "dabble in deviance" in response to our intrigue with "forbidden difference", we should hardly have to be cautioned about generalising from "who makes news" to the general populace. (p. 74)

Adding to that argument, Barrett (1977) does not support the widespread view of adolescent promiscuity, believing instead that the young are actually more permissive about the behaviour of others than about their own behaviour. Barrett argues that the sexual revolution of the 60's was predominantly a revolution of

attitudes evidenced most dramatically by an increased openness to public discussion of sexuality and sexuality issues. Reiss (1972) addresses the concerns of parents that teens are becoming sexually promiscuous with this statement: "Studies indicate that the real increase in teen-age sexual behaviour over the last generation is not in the area of sexual intercourse, but rather in the area of petting and in the public nature of some petting behaviour." He adds, "these parents probably had similar rates of coitus but perhaps lower rates of petting . . . one should note that the petting behaviour today very often is not promiscuous, but occurs in a stable, affectionate relationship." (p.27)

Documented evidence indicates that young people are changing in their attitudes to sexual behaviour in ways which are very similar to adults. Adults, however, fearing loss of control and increased teenage promiscuity, believe that peer and media influences encourage adolescent rebellion and sexual activity. Since the behaviour of teens is directly influenced by the prevailing attitudes, it is imperative that we assess the forces operating on the adolescents of today.

When comparisons are drawn between teenagers of today, and those of twenty years ago, three important differences are noteworthy: first, young people are more open about sexual matters today than they were in the past; secondly, they see sexual behaviour as more of a private matter, than a public morality; and thirdly, there appears to be a growing consensus towards a permissiveness with affection ethic, where sex is

associated with stable, long-term relationships (Coleman & Hendry, 1990).

In summary, then, we find that adolescents engage in dating behaviours while engaged in their search for identity. With increased time allocated to this adolescent period because of the extensive training period required for entry into our technological vocational arena, teens spend more time with others establishing relationships. Societal concerns are raised by the sexual activity which often accompany the dating period. Consequences are generally negative, because teens are often ill-prepared to accept and deal with difficult issues such as STDs, pregnancy and parenthood.

Schools in Alberta are currently mandated to provide sex education to all pupils. The revised Health curriculum, offered at both the elementary and the junior high levels and The Career and Life Management program offered at the high school deal with many of these issues. Controversies, however, continue to plague these programs. Each school and each community has unique needs and concerns related to the issue of adolescent sexuality. Generalizability of information gained from self-reported studies is limited: no two populations are the same. Therefore, it is imperative that educators be knowledgeable of the attitudes, behaviours, and needs of their particular student population for the programs to be most effective.

The focus of this study has been to examine the dating behaviours and expected peer group norms of the high school

students in a small urban-county educational system which is located on a the outskirts of a large urban centre in Alberta. Through examination of dating behaviours and expected dating behaviours, the following questions will be addressed.

Research Questions

1. What are the expectations of the adolescents about the dating behaviours of their peer group?

2. What are the actual dating behaviours engaged in by the high school students?

3. How do the expectations of the peer group compare with the actual dating behaviours of the high school students?

4. What is the current level of sexual activity among the high school students surveyed?

5. What factors appear to have influencing effects on the sexual activity of the high school student?

6. With regards to sexual activity, what behaviours and attitudes prevail among the surveyed population?

7. What messages would adolescents like to send to their community leaders (i.e. teachers, parents, church leaders) about dating and adolescent sexuality?

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODS

This study investigated the realm of high school adolescents in their dating attitudes, behaviours, and expectations in an effort to provide some empirical information that is current and relevant to the adolescents, their teachers, and their parents. Issues which were examined included: the level of sexual intimacy engaged in by participants, the anticipated or expected level of sexual intimacy of the peer group, as well as variables which may have influencing effects on these behaviours. Data was collected from an anonymous self-descriptive survey which was administered to the student population of a small high school, and the information gathered was analysed using the Chi-square statistical procedure.

Participants

The sample consisted of 228 high school students in the only high school of a small urban-county school district on the outskirts of Edmonton, Alberta. In total, 267 students were enrolled at this high school at the time of the survey. All participants volunteered to take part in this survey, and all provided the required parental permission for participation. Furthermore, the majority of the subjects completed the questionnaire during the same one-hour period on a given day in May, 1992. The 228 participants

represented 85.4% of the total population of the school. Of these respondents (see Figure 3.1), 80 were in grade ten (35%), 74 in grade eleven (32.5%), and 74 in grade twelve (32.5%).

Sample descriptors were obtained from the first section of the questionnaire which dealt with demographic information. The total sample of 228 adolescents consisted of 109 males (47.8%) and 119 females (52.2%). Of the grade ten participants, 41 (51.3%) were male and 39 (49.7%) were female, of the grade eleven participants, 33 (44.6%) were male and 41 (55.4%) were female, and of the grade twelve participants, 35 (47.3%) were male and 39 (52.7%) were female. (See Figure 3.2).

Participants ranged in ages from 15 to 20, with 16.6 as the mean age of the sample. Of these, 47 (20.6%) were fifteen, 77 (33.8%) were sixteen, 66 (28.9%) were seventeen, 33 (14.5%) were eighteen, 3 (1.3%) were nineteen, and 2 (.9%) were twenty. The mean ages of the three grade levels represented were: grade ten, 15.9, grade eleven, 16.4, and grade twelve, 17.5.

Of the total sample, 153 lived in town and 1 in the city, for a total urban population of 67.5%, while 68 lived on an acreage, 6 on a farm, for a total rural population of 74 (32.5%). The majority of the students that participated in this survey were living with both of their biological parents (74.6% of the total sample), 10% lived with a single parent, either mother or father, 10.5% lived with a blended family, where there was a step-parent in the home, and 3.9% had adoptive or foster parents, while 1% lived independently.

Figure 3.1: Comparison of Respondents by Grade

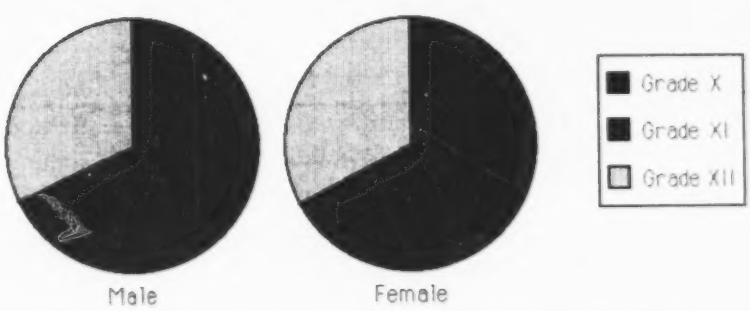


Figure 3.2: Comparison of Respondents by Gender

Sample Limitation

Since a random sample was not used in this study, and since the sample focussed on the student population of a unique urban-county school system, its generalizability to other adolescents in other systems at another time period is uncertain and possibly limited. As well, although both the academic and general program of studies are represented by the sample, the school surveyed does not offer a vocational program, and hence, Generalizability to these students in other systems may also be limited. Finally, no effort was made to establish racial or cultural documentation, as the population of the school is overwhelmingly Caucasian, so again, the results will have limitations for other racial groups.

A strong cautionary note must also be reiterated, and that involves the limiting factor of the methodology followed: the voluntary, self-report questionnaire. Although there has been tremendous movement towards openness in discussions of sex and sexual behaviours amongst teenagers, many are still very self-conscious and aware of the expectations and opinions of others. Many researchers believe that this could result in the exaggeration or the under-reporting of sexual activity (Lees, 1986; Christopher & Cate, 1988; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). Although every effort has been made to neutralise anxiety, to stress honesty, and to ensure anonymity, it is difficult to tell whether or not these biases are operating on the data, so some reservations must be maintained when examining the statistics.

Instrument

Each participant was asked to complete a questionnaire which was composed of five separate components: a demographic section, a component asking participants to predict the anticipated behaviours of their peers for various dating scenarios, another part which requested the participants to identify their own dating behaviours, a section which dealt with the sexual attitudes and behaviours of the participants, and finally, a section which was composed of open-ended questions, allowing students to express personal statements and/or opinions about dating and sexuality.

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on previous research, on personal classroom and counselling experiences, and after consultation with other educators at the high school and university levels. Copies of this questionnaire are also included in Appendix B.

The cover page of the questionnaire provided the students with their instructions, as the teachers in the classrooms were responsible for handing out and collecting the completed surveys. The instructions stressed again that the participation of the respondents was completely anonymous and voluntary, and reminded all participants that they were to feel free to skip any questions that they did not want to answer. It was also stressed that honesty was sought and implored participants to leave a question blank rather than provide a dishonest response.

Teachers were asked to read these instructions with their students prior to them beginning the questionnaire.

The demographic portion of the survey requested information on gender, age, grade level, religiosity, residence, family structure, school activities, time spent on homework, studying, part-time employment, future plans, grades, alcohol consumption, as well as tobacco and drug use. All of these responses were analysed using the Chi square statistic to see whether a significant relationship existed between the category and sexual activity.

The second and third components, dealing with peer expectations and personal dating behaviours were loosely based on previous research conducted by John K. Collins in Australia in 1974. Part Two requested the participants to predict the behaviour they felt most of the teens in the school would participate in while on dates. Part Three requested students to identify their own dating behaviours.

Questions about sexual behaviour were organised into four transitional stages: behaviour on a first date, behaviour after several dates, behaviour while going steady, and behaviour within a serious, committed relationship. For each of the four stages, six levels of intimacy were given: holding hands, kissing, necking, light petting, heavy petting, and finally, sexual intercourse ("go all the way"). To help the participants with their responses, and to ensure that the terminology used was interpreted correctly, definitions of each term were provided at the beginning of both

Part Two and Part Three.

Responses for Part Two were divided into three: "yes", "no", or "don't know". Responses for Part Three were divided into four: "yes", "no", "don't know", and "does not apply". Again, because the content of Part Three was much more personal, instructions at this point reminded participants that they were to leave out any questions which they felt they would rather not answer. The parallel components of these two sections of the questionnaire allowed the researcher to compare the actual behaviour with the peer expected behaviour of the participants, using the Chi square statistic.

Part Four asked questions directly related to sexual intercourse. Initially, it was anticipated that participants who were not sexually active would leave this section and proceed directly to the fifth and final component. However, it was a concern that participants may be intimidated into providing dishonest responses if they felt that their classmates knew they were sexually active or inactive, which could be deduced by whether they completed or left out section four. Therefore, the questions were designed so that all participants completed this section, with the addition of a null response for each, namely "I have never had sexual intercourse".

The topics included in this section covered the age of initial sexual intercourse, the individual responsible for initiation of sex, birth control use and method, if any, descriptors of first sexual experiences, rank ordering of factors which were of influence in

sexual decision making, and an assessment of the level of honesty expected of participants of this survey. In response to the question "How honest do you think the teens in high school will be in answering this questionnaire?", 15.4% felt teens would be extremely honest (90-100%), 41.2% felt teens would be very honest (75-90%, 39.5% believed respondents would be fairly honest (50-75%), while only 3.1% believed that respondents would be honest less than half of the time.

The final section, composed of open-ended responses, asked respondents to provide their own definition of "going steady", to indicate how long a couple should go out before becoming sexually active, if at all, to indicate whether they felt any pressures to become or not to become sexually active, to provide an opinion on the realism of abstinence for teens, and finally, a full page on which they could make any comments they desired about the topic to the researcher.

Procedure

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Department of Educational Psychology Research and Ethics Committee (Appendix A), as well as from the teachers and administrators of the local high school and the local school district.

Following a presentation outlining the nature and purpose of the study, the teachers, the principal, and the superintendent of schools agreed to permit the author to request

student participation in this study, and teachers agreed to help administer the survey in their classrooms on a given date. Staff and researcher agreed that the first class of the day would access the greatest number of students in the school and worked together to establish a suitable date for administration of the survey.

Because of the sensitive nature of the information sought, both student and parental permission were required. Subsequently, a three page document was given to all students in these classes to read, and to take home to their parents for review. This included a letter explaining the purpose of the study, a brief overview of the content of the questionnaire, the date, and the length of time it would likely take to administer, assurances that the confidentiality of the participants would be maintained, names of the researchers, and finally, consent forms for both the student and the parent or guardian to complete and return. (Copies of these forms are included in Appendix B). In total, 254 forms were handed out to the students in these classes. The students were asked to return the forms to their classroom teacher within four days. By the end of the week, 194 students had returned their consent forms, which the researcher personally gathered from each classroom.

Since many of the remaining students had indicated that they had forgotten or misplaced their forms, but that they would like to participate in the study, the researcher agreed to personally collect the parental permission via the telephone, if the

students completed their portion of the consent form. Forty-two telephone calls were made to parents of these remaining students, and documented on the forms as telephone contacts. Most parents had read the material sent home, several had questions which were answered by the researcher, but all 42 parents gave their support for this survey.

When everything was said and done, 237 consent forms were returned, all but one agreeable to participate in the survey, for a total of 236 or 92.9% of the eligible students. When the survey was administered, 228 students were in attendance and completed the questionnaire. This represented 89.8% of the students in the classes, and 85.4% of the total student population of the school!

Consent forms were matched with class lists, and on the given date, teachers were given questionnaires only for the participants in their classrooms. Those who were not participating were asked to work on their assignments or to use their time to their advantage. Teachers were asked to read the general instructions on the first page to their classes, and to particularly emphasise the two statements: "This questionnaire is completely ***anonymous*** and ***voluntary***" and "***We really want honest answers to the questions, but please feel free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer***".

As mentioned earlier in the discussion of the questionnaire itself, every effort was made to ensure the complete anonymity of all participants. At every break in the questionnaire, instructions

reminded participants of anonymity as well as the option to refuse a response. This was always boldly printed, and underlined for emphasis.

To further alleviate any fears students had about anonymity (as they may have felt that their classroom teacher would recognise their handwriting), all surveys were placed in unmarked envelopes which the participants were instructed to seal when they had completed the questionnaire. A volunteer student collected the sealed envelopes at the end of the class period, and was instructed to shuffle the envelopes from all classes, so that when they were returned to the researcher, identification by class and grade were also impossible. All students completed the questionnaire at the beginning of the first class, and all were completed within forty minutes.

Data Analysis

The data gathered was analysed using the Statview 512+ computer program. The Chi-square nonparametic test was used as it is the inference test most often used with nominal data in social psychology (Pagano, 1990). Since participants were free to omit any question(s) they felt uncomfortable about, and many did, all subjects, even those with missing data were used in the analysis. Consequently, the number of subjects in each analysis may vary somewhat.

Analyses were conducted between demographic variables

and sexual activity, using the Chi-square statistic, to determine whether any significant relationship existed. Chi-square was also used to determine whether gender differences existed between the expected dating behaviours as well as the actual dating behaviours of the participants. Similar comparisons were made between the actual and the expected dating behaviours, to discern any significant differences. Questions dealing with influences on adolescent decisions to become sexually active or to remain inactive were recorded and interpreted in a more qualitative manner, as were the final statements made by the participants in this survey.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the research of the current dating and sexual behaviours. As stated earlier, wherever applicable, questionnaires were scored and analysed using the Statview 512+ program. Some data did not lend itself to formal statistical analysis and thus was tabulated and presented in tables using number of responses or percentages as reference points for discussion. The information gained through the open-ended statements was examined using informal qualitative analysis techniques such as examining common themes.

The discussion begins by addressing the issue of reliability or the honesty of the responses provided by the respondents. The questions of actual dating behaviours of the population and the expected peer behaviours of the same population are addressed next, singularly, and then together, for further comparative analysis. This is followed by a discussion of the sexual activity of the population, where Chi-square analysis is used to examine potential significant relationships. In addition, other data collected such as influencing factors, feelings, experienced pressures and contraceptive use are presented. The chapter concludes with a qualitative presentation of the major themes presented by the participants in their written responses.

Authenticity of Responses

In the previous chapter, mention was made of the concerns often expressed by researchers over the accuracy of information gathered through self-report questionnaires such as the one used in this survey. Many researchers believe that males tend to over-exaggerate sexual activity because it is perceived as a positive male activity, while females, still victimised by the "double standard" tend to under-report sexual activity (Lees, 1986; Christopher & Cate, 1988; Coleman & Hendry, 1990). Obviously, if the results were not believable nor accurate, then further data analysis would be futile. To address the issue of honesty, a question was asked of the respondents: "How honest do you think the teens in high school will be in answering this questionnaire?" The results are presented in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Predicted Honesty of Responses (% rounded off to nearest whole)

Response	Gr. X (n=80)	Gr. XI (n=72)	Gr. XII (n=74)	TOTAL (n=226)
1. extremely honest (90-100%)	(11) 14%	(10) 19%	(14) 19%	(35) 15%
2. very honest (75-90%)	(23) 29%	(34) 47%	(37) 50%	(94) 41%
3. fairly honest (50-75%)	(41) 51%	(28) 39%	(21) 28%	(90) 40%
4. not very honest (< 50%)	(5) 6%	(0) 0%	(2) 3%	(7) 3%

When the data presented in Table 4.1 is examined, it is noteworthy that most of the respondents felt that the questionnaire would be answered in a truthful manner. Forty percent of the respondents believed that subjects would be fairly honest, and 56% anticipated very or extremely high levels of honesty for the survey questions. The grade ten respondents appeared more skeptical, with only 43% of their group anticipating honesty above the 75% level, while 51% of the grade participants felt that most respondents would be fairly honest. The grade eleven and grade twelve respondents appeared to be more willing to predict greater levels of honesty.

Generally, these responses indicate that most respondents treated the questionnaire seriously and provided the researcher with accurate data with which to work. These predictions were taken as indicators of the general levels of honesty for the responses. Logically, if a respondent predicts a certain level of honesty for others, it should be reasonable to assume that is the level for the individual as well.

To further examine the accuracy of the data, the responses given by the adolescents to the question dealing with their grade average were compared to the averages compiled from the school records. (Non-participants were excluded from the school grades, but those who were willing to participate, but were absent the day of the survey administration were included). From this comparison (presented in Table 4.2), which clearly displays the similarity of the expected and the actual grade averages, it was

discerned that the respondents generally treated the survey seriously and provided honest answers to the questions. As such, the information generated is believed to be both accurate and authentic.

Table 4.2: Reported vs. Actual Grade Averages

Grades	Reported (n=227)		School (n=236)	
	#	%	#	%
<40%	0	0%	2	.84%
40-50	4	1.76%	10	4.2%
50-60	41	18.06%	40	16.81%
60-70	86	37.89%	78	32.77%
70-80	66	29.07%	70	29.41%
80-90	27	11.89%	34	14.29%
>90	3	1.32%	3	1.26%

Research Question Number One:

What are the expectation of the adolescents about the dating behaviours of their peer group?

The number and percentage of respondents indicating their expectations of the dating behaviours of their peers by intimacy level, sex, and courtship stages are shown in Table 4.3. As might be expected, there is an overall tendency for sexual involvement to become more expected as a behaviour among the peer group, when the personal relationship becomes more serious, and greater

Table 4.3: Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Peer Expectations by Intimacy Level, Gender and Courtship Stages (n=228)
* Percentages calculated on the total population (n=228)

	MALE(n=109)		FEMALE(n=119)		TOTALS(n=228)	
	No.	%*	No.	%*	No.	%
ON FIRST DATE						
HOLDING HANDS	95	87%	97	82%	192	84%
KISSING	88	81%	96	81%	184	81%
NECKING	40	37%	27	23%	67	29%
LIGHT PETTING	21	19%	18	15%	39	17%
HEAVY PETTING	10	9%	0	0%	10	4%
INTERCOURSE	7	6%	0	0%	7	3%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES						
HOLDING HANDS	103	94%	118	99%	221	97%
KISSING	102	94%	118	99%	220	96%
NECKING	96	88%	100	84%	196	86%
LIGHT PETTING	68	62%	69	58%	137	60%
HEAVY PETTING	33	30%	15	13%	48	21%
INTERCOURSE	22	20%	3	3%	25	11%
WHEN GOING STEADY						
HOLDING HANDS	103	94%	119	100%	222	97%
KISSING	105	96%	119	100%	224	98%
NECKING	103	94%	119	100%	222	97%
LIGHT PETTING	93	85%	111	93%	204	89%
HEAVY PETTING	67	61%	75	63%	142	62%
INTERCOURSE	39	36%	33	28%	72	32%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP						
HOLDING HANDS	103	94%	119	100%	222	97%
KISSING	106	97%	119	100%	225	99%
NECKING	106	97%	118	99%	224	98%
LIGHT PETTING	101	93%	114	96%	215	94%
HEAVY PETTING	95	87%	108	91%	203	89%
INTERCOURSE	86	79%	87	73%	173	76%

commitment is involved. Although the trend is not unexpected, the percentages generated by the respondents on the survey clearly indicate the adolescents' concept of acceptable behaviour. Noteworthy are the figures for the more intense sexual intimacies, namely the petting and intercourse data. Expectations about having intercourse rose steadily among the surveyed adolescents, from a low of 3% for a first date, to a high of 76% within a committed relationship.

Gender Differences:

Gender differences appear at several levels in the dating relationship. Six percent of the males surveyed anticipate sexual intercourse on the first date, while none of the females seemed to agree. The responses provided to the question dealing with anticipated sexual behaviour on a first date suggest some incongruity exists between the genders. With the exception of kissing, females indicated that they expect less sexual involvement on the first date than do their male counterparts. However, after several dates, the females surveyed revealed that they expected slightly more affectional behaviour such as hand holding (males, 94%; females 99%) and kissing (males 94%; females 99%) than the males, but less of the more intensive sexual activity, in particular heavy petting (males 30%; females 13%) and intercourse (males 20%; females 3%).

When the relationship became more meaningful, as in a "steady" relationship, or in a committed relationship, the females

surveyed aligned their expectations more closely to those of their male counterparts. While going steady, males anticipated that 36% of the couple would engage in intercourse, while 28% of the surveyed females agreed; when a couple were in a committed relationship, then 79% of the males and 73% of the females expected this level of sexual intimacy.

Grade level Comparisons:

Tables 4.4A and 4.4B examine the same data from another perspective. Is there any notable difference in the anticipated dating behaviours of the various grade levels in the school?

Grade ten males appear to have elevated expectations when compared to those of their older school mates while on a first date. Over half (61%) believe that necking is to be expected on a first date; while almost one third (32%) indicated light petting was anticipatable for the same situation; and 12% suggested that intercourse would be acceptable. The grade eleven and twelve males tended to exhibit more constraint, with only one individual in each grade, for a total representation of 3%, suggesting that intercourse was acceptable while on an initial outing with a date.

Even when the couple had only gone out several times, at the second level of dating that the researcher examined, the grade ten males indicated greater expectancies of high sexual intimacies than did their older male peers. Light petting, defined as "fondling of the body", was expected for 73% of the grade ten males after a few dates, but only for 43% of the grade

Table 4.4A: Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Peer Expectations by Intimacy Level, Courtship Stages, and Grade Level: Males (n=109)

	MALES							
TOTAL N	41		33		35		109	
ON FIRST DATE	Grade X		Grade XI		Grade XII		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
HOLDING HANDS	40	98%	29	88%	26	74%	95	87%
KISSING	38	93%	29	88%	21	60%	88	81%
NECKING	25	61%	9	27%	6	17%	40	37%
LIGHT PETTING	13	32%	3	9%	5	14%	21	19%
HEAVY PETTING	8	20%	1	3%	1	3%	10	9%
INTERCOURSE	5	12%	1	3%	1	3%	7	6%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES								
HOLDING HANDS	39	95%	31	94%	33	94%	103	94%
KISSING	40	98%	31	94%	31	89%	102	94%
NECKING	39	95%	27	82%	30	86%	96	88%
LIGHT PETTING	30	73%	23	70%	15	43%	68	62%
HEAVY PETTING	17	41%	9	27%	7	20%	33	30%
INTERCOURSE	14	34%	4	12%	4	11%	22	20%
WHEN GOING STEADY								
HOLDING HANDS	38	93%	33	100%	32	91%	103	94%
KISSING	40	98%	33	100%	32	91%	105	96%
NECKING	38	93%	33	100%	32	91%	103	94%
LIGHT PETTING	37	90%	30	91%	26	74%	93	85%
HEAVY PETTING	24	59%	24	73%	19	54%	67	61%
INTERCOURSE	16	39%	14	42%	9	26%	39	36%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP								
HOLDING HANDS	38	93%	33	100%	32	91%	103	94%
KISSING	41	100%	33	100%	32	91%	106	97%
NECKING	41	100%	33	100%	32	91%	106	97%
LIGHT PETTING	38	93%	31	94%	32	91%	101	93%
HEAVY PETTING	38	93%	29	88%	28	80%	95	87%
INTERCOURSE	34	83%	27	82%	25	71%	86	79%

Table 4.4B: Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Peer Expectations by Intimacy Level, Courtship Stages and Grade Level. Female Respondents (n=119)

	FEMALES							
TOTAL N	39		41		39		119	
ON FIRST DATE	Grade X		Grade XI		Grade XII		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
HOLDING HANDS	34	87%	32	78%	31	79%	97	82%
KISSING	33	85%	32	78%	31	79%	96	81%
NECKING	13	33%	8	20%	6	15%	27	23%
LIGHT PETTING	9	23%	3	7%	6	15%	18	15%
HEAVY PETTING	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
INTERCOURSE	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES								
HOLDING HANDS	39	100%	41	100%	38	97%	118	99%
KISSING	39	100%	40	98%	39	100%	118	99%
NECKING	36	92%	30	73%	34	87%	100	84%
LIGHT PETTING	26	67%	26	63%	17	44%	69	58%
HEAVY PETTING	7	18%	5	12%	3	8%	15	13%
INTERCOURSE	2	5%	0	0%	1	3%	3	3%
WHEN GOING STEADY								
HOLDING HANDS	39	100%	41	100%	39	100%	119	100%
KISSING	39	100%	41	100%	39	100%	119	100%
NECKING	39	100%	41	100%	39	100%	119	100%
LIGHT PETTING	38	97%	38	93%	35	90%	111	93%
HEAVY PETTING	26	67%	27	66%	22	56%	75	63%
INTERCOURSE	12	31%	9	22%	12	31%	33	28%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP								
HOLDING HANDS	39	100%	41	100%	39	100%	119	100%
KISSING	39	100%	41	100%	39	100%	119	100%
NECKING	39	100%	40	98%	39	100%	118	99%
LIGHT PETTING	38	97%	39	95%	37	95%	114	96%
HEAVY PETTING	37	95%	38	93%	33	85%	108	91%
INTERCOURSE	29	74%	33	80%	25	64%	87	73%

twelve males. The grade eleven and grade twelve males reported more conservative expectations, with 12% grade elevens and 11% grade twelves expecting a couple to engage in intercourse after several dates. By contrast, over one-third, 34% of the grade ten males believed sexual intercourse would be experienced.

What about the young women in the school? Not unexpectedly, they tended to be more reserved in their expectations of acceptable dating behaviours. The females leaned towards congruence in their expectations of first date behaviours, and without exception, agreed that sexual intercourse and heavy petting were not expected behaviours at this level of dating. This congruent trend appears to continue throughout all four levels of dating, and throughout most of the levels of sexual intimacy. Very few females at any grade level anticipated sexual intercourse until the third level of dating, that of going steady. Then, one third of the female population expected a couple to become intimate. Similar patterns are created by the responses of all three grade levels; the consistency is remarkable (see Table 4.4.B).

When a relationship has a strong element of commitment attached to it, that is, the couple is anticipating marriage, then the female expectations parallel those of the males most closely. Generally speaking, however, the females are more conservative in their expectations than their male counterparts at each grade level.

Research Question Number Two:

What are the actual dating behaviours engaged in by the high school student?

While tables 4.3, 4.4.A, and 4.4.B gave us an excellent perspective of the expected dating behaviours of the surveyed population of adolescents, they really are meaningless unless compared to the actual dating behaviours. To achieve this end, participants were also asked to report on their own dating experiences and behaviours, using questions which directly parallelled those dealing with peer expectations. For example, where the phrasing of the "peer expectation question" was "If two people who liked each other were on a first date, would you expect them to. . . hold hands?", then the corresponding question for "actual experiences" was "On any of the first date(s) with someone you liked, did you ever. . . hold hands?". (The complete questionnaire is included in the Appendix C).

It is at this point that the respondents began to decrease in number, for obviously, it would be unreasonable to expect every adolescent in this population to have experienced all four levels of dating. Most interesting were the numbers of participants who had never been on even one date. Fifteen students (7%) claimed to have never been on a date ("date" having been defined as "when a boy and a girl plan to meet alone or in a group at some place at some time"); 46 (20%)had never gone out with the same individual more than twice; and 71 (31%) had never gone steady. As expected with high school adolescents, fewer had been

involved in committed relationships where marriage was spoken of. In total, only 65 respondents, or 29% of the surveyed population felt they had been in this type of a relationship.

The data was organised in two different tables, for it was believed that each table had something relevant to show. Table 4.5 shows the data for reported behaviour as percentages of the population who had actually had experience at that dating level. Data from this table would answer the question, "What percentage of the students who have gone steady, have been sexually intimate?" The following tables, Table 4.5.A and Table 4.5.B list exactly the same data, but break the information into smaller gender related components. Table 4.6 re-examines the same statistics, but from the perspective of the entire surveyed population. This table answers the question, "What percentage of the high school students have had sexual intercourse while in a steady relationship?". Again, the larger table is shown as two featuring gender and grade (Tables 4.6.A and Tables 4.6.B).

The impact of the data is softened considerably in the second set of tables (Table 4.6, 4.6A, 4.6B). For example, after several dates, 22% of the males and 12% of the females from the total surveyed population (n=228) claimed to have been sexually intimate. Of the 182 respondents who had actually been on several dates with the same individual, 27% of the males and 15% of the females claimed intimacy. When all two hundred and twenty-eight respondents were compared to the individuals who claimed sexual intimacy while going steady, it was found that 40%

Table 4.5 Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Actual Dating Behaviour by Intimacy Level, Gender and Courtship Stages (n=228)

* Percentages calculated on reducing populations, as determined by the respondents who reported experience at the various dating levels

	MALE(n=109)		FEMALE(n=119)		TOTALS(n=228)	
	No.	%*	No.	%*	No.	%
ON FIRST DATE						
	Male(n=100)		Female(n=113)		Total(n=213)	
HOLDING HANDS	91	91%	95	84%	186	87%
KISSING	86	86%	92	81%	178	84%
NECKING	61	61%	58	51%	119	56%
LIGHT PETTING	40	40%	34	30%	74	35%
HEAVY PETTING	21	21%	12	11%	33	15%
INTERCOURSE	14	14%	9	8%	23	11%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES						
	Male(n=88)		Female(n=95)		Total(n=182)	
HOLDING HANDS	86	98%	94	99%	180	99%
KISSING	86	98%	95	100%	181	99%
NECKING	79	90%	85	89%	164	90%
LIGHT PETTING	61	69%	69	73%	130	71%
HEAVY PETTING	38	43%	30	32%	68	37%
INTERCOURSE	24	27%	14	15%	38	21%
WHEN GOING STEADY						
	Male(n=76)		Female(n=81)		Total(n=157)	
HOLDING HANDS	75	99%	81	100%	156	99%
KISSING	75	99%	81	100%	156	99%
NECKING	75	99%	79	98%	154	98%
LIGHT PETTING	66	87%	74	91%	140	89%
HEAVY PETTING	58	76%	65	80%	123	78%
INTERCOURSE	44	58%	44	54%	88	56%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP						
	Male(n=25)		Female(n=40)		Total(n=65)	
HOLDING HANDS	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%
KISSING	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%
NECKING	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%
LIGHT PETTING	24	96%	40	100%	64	98%
HEAVY PETTING	24	96%	38	95%	62	95%
INTERCOURSE	21	84%	34	85%	55	85%

Table 4.5A: Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Dating Behaviours by Intimacy Level, Courtship Stages and Grade Level: Male Respondents

*Percentages calculated on reducing populations as determined by the respondents reported experience at the various dating levels.

	MALES							
TOTAL N	41		33		35		109	
	Grade X		Grade XI		Grade XII		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
ON FIRST DATE	n=36		n=32		n=32		n=100	
HOLDING HANDS	35	97%	28	88%	28	88%	91	91%
KISSING	31	86%	29	91%	26	81%	86	86%
NECKING	26	72%	18	56%	17	53%	61	61%
LIGHT PETTING	16	44%	11	34%	13	41%	40	40%
HEAVY PETTING	9	25%	6	19%	6	19%	21	21%
INTERCOURSE	5	14%	5	16%	4	12%	14	14%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES	n=30		n=28		n=30		n=88	
HOLDING HANDS	30	100%	27	96%	29	97%	86	98%
KISSING	30	100%	27	96%	29	97%	86	98%
NECKING	27	90%	24	86%	28	93%	79	90%
LIGHT PETTING	24	80%	18	64%	19	63%	61	69%
HEAVY PETTING	15	50%	11	39%	12	40%	38	43%
INTERCOURSE	9	30%	6	21%	9	30%	24	27%
WHEN GOING STEADY	n=25		n=23		n=28		n=76	
HOLDING HANDS	24	96%	23	100%	28	100%	75	99%
KISSING	24	96%	23	100%	28	100%	75	69%
NECKING	24	96%	23	100%	28	100%	75	69%
LIGHT PETTING	20	80%	22	96%	24	86%	66	61%
HEAVY PETTING	17	68%	20	87%	21	75%	58	53%
INTERCOURSE	13	52%	16	70%	15	54%	44	40%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP	n=3		n=7		n=15		n=25	
HOLDING HANDS	3	100%	7	100%	15	100%	25	100%
KISSING	3	100%	7	100%	15	100%	25	100%
NECKING	3	100%	7	100%	15	100%	25	100%
LIGHT PETTING	3	100%	7	100%	14	93%	24	96%
HEAVY PETTING	3	100%	7	100%	14	93%	24	96%
INTERCOURSE	2	67%	6	86%	13	87%	21	84%

Table 4.5B: Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Dating Behaviours by Intimacy Level, Courtship Stages and Grade Level: Female Respondents
*Percentages calculated on reducing populations as determined by the respondents reported experience at the various dating levels.

	FEMALES							
TOTAL N	39		41		39		119	
	Grade X		Grade XI		Grade XII		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
ON FIRST DATE								
	n=37		n=37		n=38		n=113	
HOLDING HANDS	34	92%	28	88%	33	103%	95	95%
KISSING	33	89%	29	91%	30	94%	92	92%
NECKING	25	68%	19	59%	14	44%	58	58%
LIGHT PETTING	16	43%	11	34%	7	22%	34	34%
HEAVY PETTING	7	19%	2	6%	3	9%	12	12%
INTERCOURSE	5	14%	1	3%	3	9%	9	9%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES								
	n=32		n=30		n=33		n=95	
HOLDING HANDS	30	94%	27	90%	29	88%	86	91%
KISSING	30	94%	27	90%	29	88%	86	91%
NECKING	27	84%	24	80%	28	85%	79	83%
LIGHT PETTING	24	75%	18	60%	19	58%	61	64%
HEAVY PETTING	15	47%	11	37%	12	36%	38	40%
INTERCOURSE	9	28%	6	20%	9	27%	24	25%
WHEN GOING STEADY								
	n=27		n=27		n=27		n=81	
HOLDING HANDS	27	100%	27	100%	27	100%	81	100%
KISSING	27	100%	27	100%	27	100%	81	100%
NECKING	27	100%	26	96%	26	96%	79	98%
LIGHT PETTING	26	96%	24	89%	24	89%	74	91%
HEAVY PETTING	26	96%	20	74%	19	70%	65	80%
INTERCOURSE	13	48%	17	63%	14	52%	44	54%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP								
	n=13		n=13		n=14		n=40	
HOLDING HANDS	13	100%	13	100%	14	100%	40	100%
KISSING	13	100%	13	100%	14	100%	40	100%
NECKING	13	100%	13	100%	14	100%	40	100%
LIGHT PETTING	13	100%	13	100%	14	100%	40	100%
HEAVY PETTING	13	100%	11	85%	14	100%	38	95%
INTERCOURSE	11	85%	10	77%	13	93%	34	85%

Table 4.6 Number and Percentage of Respondents indicating Their Actual Dating Behaviour by Intimacy Level, Gender and Courtship Stages (n=228)
* Percentages calculated on the total population (n=228)

	MALE(n=109)		FEMALE(n=119)		TOTALS(n=228)	
	No.	%*	No.	%*	No.	%
ON FIRST DATE						
HOLDING HANDS	91	83%	95	80%	186	82%
KISSING	86	79%	92	77%	178	78%
NECKING	61	56%	58	49%	119	52%
LIGHT PETTING	40	37%	34	29%	74	32%
HEAVY PETTING	21	19%	12	10%	33	14%
INTERCOURSE	14	13%	9	8%	23	10%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES						
HOLDING HANDS	86	79%	94	79%	180	79%
KISSING	86	79%	95	80%	181	79%
NECKING	79	72%	85	71%	164	72%
LIGHT PETTING	61	56%	69	58%	130	57%
HEAVY PETTING	38	35%	30	25%	68	30%
INTERCOURSE	24	22%	14	12%	38	17%
WHEN GOING STEADY						
HOLDING HANDS	75	69%	81	68%	156	68%
KISSING	75	69%	81	68%	156	68%
NECKING	75	69%	79	66%	154	68%
LIGHT PETTING	66	61%	74	62%	140	61%
HEAVY PETTING	58	53%	65	55%	123	54%
INTERCOURSE	44	40%	44	37%	88	39%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP						
HOLDING HANDS	25	23%	40	34%	65	29%
KISSING	25	23%	40	34%	65	29%
NECKING	25	23%	40	34%	65	29%
LIGHT PETTING	24	22%	40	34%	64	28%
HEAVY PETTING	24	22%	38	32%	62	27%
INTERCOURSE	21	19%	34	29%	55	24%

Table 4.6A: Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Dating Behaviours by Intimacy Level, Courtship Stages and Grade Level: Male Respondents

	MALES							
TOTAL N	41		33		35		109	
ON FIRST DATE	Grade X		Grade XI		Grade XII		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
HOLDING HANDS	35	85%	28	85%	28	80%	91	83%
KISSING	31	76%	29	88%	26	74%	86	79%
NECKING	26	63%	18	55%	17	49%	61	56%
LIGHT PETTING	16	39%	11	33%	13	37%	40	37%
HEAVY PETTING	9	22%	6	18%	6	17%	21	19%
INTERCOURSE	5	12%	5	15%	4	11%	14	13%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES								
HOLDING HANDS	30	73%	27	82%	29	83%	86	79%
KISSING	30	73%	27	82%	29	83%	86	79%
NECKING	27	66%	24	73%	28	80%	79	72%
LIGHT PETTING	24	59%	18	55%	19	54%	61	56%
HEAVY PETTING	15	37%	11	33%	12	34%	38	35%
INTERCOURSE	9	22%	6	18%	9	26%	24	22%
WHEN GOING STEADY								
HOLDING HANDS	24	59%	23	70%	28	80%	75	69%
KISSING	24	59%	23	70%	28	80%	75	69%
NECKING	24	59%	23	70%	28	80%	75	69%
LIGHT PETTING	20	49%	22	67%	24	69%	66	61%
HEAVY PETTING	17	41%	20	61%	21	60%	58	53%
INTERCOURSE	13	32%	16	48%	15	43%	44	40%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP								
HOLDING HANDS	3	7%	7	21%	15	43%	25	23%
KISSING	3	7%	7	21%	15	43%	25	23%
NECKING	3	7%	7	21%	15	43%	25	23%
LIGHT PETTING	3	7%	7	21%	14	40%	24	22%
HEAVY PETTING	3	7%	7	21%	14	40%	24	22%
INTERCOURSE	2	5%	6	18%	13	37%	21	19%

Table 4.6B: Number and Percentage of Respondents Indicating Their Dating Behaviours by Intimacy Level, Courtship Stages and Grade Level: Female Respondents

	FEMALES							
TOTAL N	39		41		39		119	
ON FIRST DATE	Grade X		Grade XI		Grade XII		TOTAL	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
HOLDING HANDS	34	87%	28	68%	33	85%	95	80%
KISSING	33	85%	29	71%	30	77%	92	77%
NECKING	25	64%	19	46%	14	36%	58	49%
LIGHT PETTING	16	41%	11	27%	7	18%	34	29%
HEAVY PETTING	7	18%	2	5%	3	8%	12	10%
INTERCOURSE	5	13%	1	2%	3	8%	9	8%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES								
HOLDING HANDS	32	82%	30	73%	32	82%	94	79%
KISSING	32	82%	30	73%	33	85%	95	80%
NECKING	30	77%	28	68%	27	69%	85	71%
LIGHT PETTING	27	69%	21	51%	21	54%	69	58%
HEAVY PETTING	13	33%	10	24%	7	18%	30	25%
INTERCOURSE	6	15%	4	10%	4	10%	14	12%
WHEN GOING STEADY								
HOLDING HANDS	27	69%	27	66%	27	69%	81	68%
KISSING	27	69%	27	66%	27	69%	81	68%
NECKING	27	69%	26	63%	26	67%	79	66%
LIGHT PETTING	26	67%	24	59%	24	62%	74	62%
HEAVY PETTING	26	67%	20	49%	19	49%	65	55%
INTERCOURSE	13	33%	17	41%	14	36%	44	37%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP								
HOLDING HANDS	13	33%	13	32%	14	36%	40	34%
KISSING	13	33%	13	32%	14	36%	40	34%
NECKING	13	33%	13	32%	14	36%	40	34%
LIGHT PETTING	13	33%	13	32%	14	36%	40	34%
HEAVY PETTING	13	33%	11	27%	14	36%	38	32%
INTERCOURSE	11	28%	10	24%	13	33%	34	29%

of the males and 37% of the females had been sexually involved. However, of the one hundred and sixty-two individuals who had actually been in a steady relationship, 58% of the males and 54% of the females had been sexually intimate.

This trend continued, for as the dating level became more intense and committed, fewer and fewer individuals at this high school shared the experiences. But, of those who experienced the more intense dating relationships, greater percentages participated in more intimate behaviour. Thus comparisons using percentages based upon the total research population tended to be somewhat misleading, as they gave the impression that the levels of sexual intimacy were decreasing as the levels of involvement increased. Obviously this is not the case. On the other hand, if only Tables 4.5 (Tables 4.5, 4.5A, 4.5B) were to be examined, the information presented could also be misinterpreted. At a cursory glance, it would appear that promiscuity at the high school level was rampant. This is most evident at the final level of dating commitment. In this study, while in a committed relationship, 19% of the males and 29% of the females had experienced sexual intercourse, when compared to the total number of respondents. But when compared to the actual number of individuals who had experienced a committed relationship (n=65), 84% of the males, and 86% of the females claimed to have been sexually intimate. On a more humorous note, when compared to the total surveyed population, only 69% of the males and 68% of the females had ever kissed while in a steady dating relationship. As expected,

there would be more kissing involved, which is documented by the data presented on Table 4.5, where all respondents, who had ever gone steady, reported kissing as an actual activity.

Gender Differences:

Generally, extreme gender differences did not appear, regardless of the organisation of the data. The notable exception was the fourth courtship stage, that of the committed relationship. When the number of respondents were compared to the overall total peer group (n=109 male; n=119 female), the percentages suggest that considerable gender differences exist. However, it should be noted that the number of males who have been involved in a committed relationship are very small (n=25) as compared to the females (n=40), and as such, would create the statistical imbalance. This issue will be addressed in the following chapter, but the reader should remember that adolescent girls tend to become socially active at younger ages and tend to date older peers, so the likelihood of them being in a serious relationship while in high school is much greater than that of their male counterparts, especially at the younger grade levels.

Research Question Number Three:

How do the expectations of the peer group compare with the actual behaviours of the high school students?

To facilitate comparisons between the peer expected behaviour and the actual reported behaviour, the data was again

presented in two tables (Table 4.7 and 4.8). The former (Table 4.7) compares the actual behaviour, as recorded on Table 4.5 (with decreasing "n" in percentage calculations) with the peer expected behaviours as determined by the total respondent population of 228. As all respondents were "peers" of each other, within the same school system, it was arguable that this comparison was valid. But upon further reflection, a concern arose. What if the information were biased? Those individuals who had not yet experienced strong interpersonal relationships could perhaps be more conservative in their expectations. . . or perhaps, more liberal. To address this issue, Table 4.8 was developed.

In this table, the comparisons of the actual and the peer anticipated behaviour are made between the same respondents. Thus, the 213 respondents for the dating level of "first date", are also the subjects used for the peer expected response, and the 162 respondents who had gone steady, also were the respondents who provided the data for the peer expectations at the same level of dating. Was there a notable difference?

Generally speaking, the respondents indicated that they believed themselves to be more experienced than their peers in dating behaviours. Even when their behaviour was compared to the expectations of their peers' behaviour, the same held true: the respondents perceived themselves to have had more experience, to be more sexually intimate while dating than their school peers. As the relationship progressed towards greater levels of

commitment, the actual reported behaviour began to mirror the expected behaviour, showing remarkable consensus in respondents' perceived and actual behaviour.

Grade Differences:

Finally, how did the different grade levels fare, when the expected and actual dating behaviours were compared? Table 4.9 presents this data for perusal. Of the grade tens who had actually gone on a date, 14% had sexual intercourse, while only 5% of the surveyed grade tens indicated that they expected this behaviour. Similarly, approximately 10% of the grade eleven and grade twelve respondents who had gone on dates were sexually active, but only 1% expected this behaviour. These trends continue throughout: of the respondents who had actually participated at the various dating levels, significantly greater percentages reported intimate sexual behaviour than was expected by the peer group.

Table 4.7: Comparison of actual reported dating behaviour and peer expectations by intimacy level, sex, and courtship stages. (Note: percentages of actual behaviour are evaluated on reducing 'n'; peer expectations calculated on total population.

	Behavior						Peer Expectations					
ON FIRST DATE	Male (n=100)		Female (n=113)		Total (n=213)		Male (n=109		Female (n=119)		Total (n=228)	
HOLDING HANDS	91	91%	95	84%	186	87%	95	87%	97	82%	192	84%
KISSING	86	86%	92	81%	178	84%	88	81%	96	81%	184	81%
NECKING	61	61%	58	51%	119	56%	40	37%	27	23%	67	29%
LIGHT PETTING	40	40%	34	30%	74	35%	21	19%	18	15%	39	17%
HEAVY PETTING	21	21%	12	11%	33	15%	10	9%	0	0%	10	4%
INTERCOURSE	14	14%	9	8%	23	11%	7	6%	0	0%	7	3%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES	Male (n=88)		Female (n=95)		Total (n=182)		Male (n=109		Female (n=119)		Total (n=228)	
HOLDING HANDS	86	98%	94	99%	180	99%	103	94%	118	99%	221	97%
KISSING	86	98%	95	100%	181	99%	102	94%	118	99%	220	96%
NECKING	79	90%	85	89%	164	90%	96	88%	100	84%	196	86%
LIGHT PETTING	61	69%	69	73%	130	71%	68	62%	69	58%	137	60%
HEAVY PETTING	38	43%	30	32%	68	37%	33	30%	15	13%	48	21%
INTERCOURSE	24	27%	14	15%	38	21%	22	20%	3	3%	25	11%
WHEN GOING STEADY	Male (n=76)		Female (n=81)		Total (n=157)		Male (n=109		Female (n=119)		Total (n=228)	
HOLDING HANDS	75	99%	81	100%	156	99%	103	94%	119	100%	222	97%
KISSING	75	99%	81	100%	156	99%	105	96%	119	100%	224	98%
NECKING	75	99%	79	98%	154	98%	103	94%	119	100%	222	97%
LIGHT PETTING	66	87%	74	91%	140	89%	93	85%	111	93%	204	89%
HEAVY PETTING	58	76%	65	80%	123	78%	67	61%	75	63%	142	62%
INTERCOURSE	44	58%	44	54%	88	56%	39	36%	33	28%	72	32%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP	Male (n=25)		Female (n=40)		Total (n=65)		Male (n=109		Female (n=119)		Total (n=228)	
HOLDING HANDS	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%	103	94%	119	100%	222	97%
KISSING	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%	106	97%	119	100%	225	99%
NECKING	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%	106	97%	118	99%	224	98%
LIGHT PETTING	24	96%	40	100%	64	98%	101	93%	114	96%	215	94%
HEAVY PETTING	24	96%	38	95%	62	95%	95	87%	108	91%	203	89%
INTERCOURSE	21	84%	34	85%	55	85%	86	79%	87	73%	173	76%

Table 4.8. Comparison of dating behavior and peer expectations by intimacy level, sex, and courtship stages matched by respondents' actual reported experience levels.

	Behavior						Peer Expectations					
ON FIRST DATE	Male (n=100)		Female (n=113)		Total (n=213)		Male (n=100)		Female (n=113)		Total (n=213)	
HOLDING HANDS	91	91%	95	84%	186	87%	86	86%	94	83%	180	85%
KISSING	86	86%	92	81%	178	84%	81	81%	93	82%	174	82%
NECKING	61	61%	58	51%	119	56%	38	38%	27	24%	65	31%
LIGHT PETTING	40	40%	34	30%	74	35%	19	19%	18	16%	37	17%
HEAVY PETTING	21	21%	12	11%	33	15%	9	9%	0	0%	9	4%
INTERCOURSE	14	14%	9	8%	23	11%	6	6%	0	0%	6	3%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES	Male (n=88)		Female (n=95)		Total (n=182)		Male (n=88)		Female (n=95)		Total (n=182)	
HOLDING HANDS	86	98%	94	99%	180	99%	85	97%	95	100%	180	99%
KISSING	86	98%	95	100%	181	99%	84	95%	95	100%	179	98%
NECKING	79	90%	85	89%	164	90%	81	92%	82	86%	163	90%
LIGHT PETTING	61	69%	69	73%	130	71%	60	68%	55	58%	115	63%
HEAVY PETTING	38	43%	30	32%	68	37%	29	33%	13	14%	42	23%
INTERCOURSE	24	27%	14	15%	38	21%	20	23%	2	2%	22	12%
WHEN GOING STEADY	Male (n=76)		Female (n=81)		Total (n=157)		Male (n=76)		Female (n=81)		Total (n=157)	
HOLDING HANDS	75	99%	81	100%	156	99%	73	96%	81	100%	154	98%
KISSING	75	99%	81	100%	156	99%	74	97%	81	100%	155	99%
NECKING	75	99%	79	98%	154	98%	74	97%	81	100%	155	99%
LIGHT PETTING	66	87%	74	91%	140	89%	66	87%	79	98%	145	92%
HEAVY PETTING	58	76%	65	80%	123	78%	52	68%	52	64%	104	66%
INTERCOURSE	44	58%	44	54%	88	56%	31	41%	22	27%	53	34%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP	Male (n=25)		Female (n=40)		Total (n=65)		Male (n=25)		Female (n=40)		Total (n=65)	
HOLDING HANDS	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%
KISSING	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%
NECKING	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%
LIGHT PETTING	24	96%	40	100%	64	98%	25	100%	40	100%	65	100%
HEAVY PETTING	24	96%	38	95%	62	95%	24	96%	38	95%	62	95%
INTERCOURSE	21	84%	34	85%	55	85%	20	80%	31	78%	51	78%

Table 4.9: Comparison of actual reported dating behavior and peer expectations by intimacy level, grade, and courtship stages. (Note: percentages of actual behavior are evaluated on reducing "n"; peer expectations calculated on total population.

	Behavior						Peer Expectations					
ON FIRST DATE	Grade X (n=73)		Grade XI (n=69)		Grade XII (n=71)		Grade X (n=80)		Grade XI (n=74)		Grade XII (n=74)	
HOLDING HANDS	69	95%	56	81%	61	86%	67	84%	59	80%	54	73%
KISSING	64	88%	58	84%	56	79%	64	80%	60	81%	50	68%
NECKING	51	70%	37	54%	31	44%	26	32%	17	23%	12	16%
LIGHT PETTING	32	44%	22	32%	20	28%	20	25%	6	8%	11	15%
HEAVY PETTING	16	22%	8	12%	9	13%	7	9%	1	1%	1	1%
INTERCOURSE	10	14%	6	9%	7	10%	4	5%	1	1%	1	1%
AFTER SEVERAL DATES												
	Grade X (n=61)		Grade XI (n=58)		Grade XII (n=63)		Grade X (n=80)		Grade XI (n=74)		Grade XII (n=74)	
HOLDING HANDS	61	100%	57	98%	62	98%	62	78%	58	78%	62	84%
KISSING	61	100%	57	98%	63	100%	62	78%	59	80%	58	78%
NECKING	57	93%	52	90%	55	87%	60	75%	49	66%	54	73%
LIGHT PETTING	51	84%	39	67%	40	63%	46	58%	40	54%	29	39%
HEAVY PETTING	28	46%	21	36%	19	30%	19	24%	13	18%	10	14%
INTERCOURSE	15	25%	10	17%	13	21%	13	16%	4	5%	5	7%
WHEN GOING STEADY												
	Grade X (n=52)		Grade XI (n=50)		Grade XII (n=55)		Grade X (n=80)		Grade XI (n=74)		Grade XII (n=74)	
HOLDING HANDS	51	98%	50	100%	55	100%	51	64%	51	69%	52	70%
KISSING	51	98%	50	100%	55	100%	52	65%	51	69%	52	70%
NECKING	51	98%	49	98%	54	98%	52	65%	51	69%	52	70%
LIGHT PETTING	46	88%	46	92%	48	87%	49	61%	48	65%	48	65%
HEAVY PETTING	43	83%	40	80%	40	73%	33	41%	37	50%	34	46%
INTERCOURSE	26	50%	33	66%	29	53%	19	24%	17	23%	17	23%
WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP												
	Grade X (n=16)		Grade XI (n=20)		Grade XII (n=29)		Grade X (n=80)		Grade XI (n=74)		Grade XII (n=74)	
HOLDING HANDS	16	100%	20	100%	29	100%	18	22%	21	28%	26	35%
KISSING	16	100%	20	100%	29	100%	18	22%	21	28%	26	35%
NECKING	16	100%	20	100%	29	100%	18	22%	21	28%	26	35%
LIGHT PETTING	16	100%	20	100%	28	97%	18	22%	21	28%	26	35%
HEAVY PETTING	16	100%	18	90%	28	97%	17	21%	20	27%	25	34%
INTERCOURSE	13	81%	16	80%	26	90%	13	16%	18	24%	20	27%

Research Question Number Four:

What is the current status of sexual activity among the high school students surveyed?

Questions in Part 4 of the questionnaire asked the respondents about their sexual behaviour, patterns, and attitudes. Each will be addressed separately in the following section.

Reported Level of Sexual Activity:

The reported numbers of sexually active adolescents from the surveyed population are presented in the following chart.

Table 4.10: Reported Numbers of Sexually Active Adolescents by Gender, and Grade

Grade	Males		Females		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
X: (41M/39F)	19	46%	19	49%	38	48%
XI: (33M/41F)	24	73%	23	56%	47	64%
XII:(35M/39F)	24	69%	18	46%	42	57%
TOTAL (n=228)	67	61%	60	50%	127	56%

Reported sexual activity among the adolescents who participated in this survey, reveal that about half of the teenagers in this community have had sexual intercourse at least once. Forty-eight percent of the grade tens have been sexually active, 64% of the grade elevens and 57% of the grade twelves, for an

overall total of 56%. Gender differences are slight at the grade ten level, with a reported 49% of the grade ten males and 46% of the grade ten females reporting sexual involvement. At the higher grade levels, though, gender differences are acute. Fifty-six percent of the grade eleven females and 46% of the grade twelve females have been sexually active, as compared to 73% of the grade eleven males and 69% of the grade twelve males. When compared to their peers by gender, 61% of the males claim sexual experience, but only 50% of the females state the same.

Age of First Intercourse:

At what age are adolescents becoming sexually active? It would appear from the surveyed population that adolescents are becoming sexually active during pre-high school years. Table 4.11A presents the information by gender, while Table 4.11B examines it from a grade perspective.

When Table 4.11A is examined, it is interesting to note that 12% of the male respondents and 5% of the female respondents claimed to have been sexually active by the age of thirteen. It appeared that adolescents who decided to become sexually active, made that decision prior to age seventeen. All but one of the surveyed respondents had become sexually active by the age of seventeen. Noteworthy is the data for the number of abstinent respondents: 45% of the total surveyed population, 40% of the males and 50% of the females.

Table 4.11A: Age At First Intercourse (n=227)
(note: percentages rounded to nearest whole)

Age	Male(109)			Female(119)			Total(227)		
	#	%	cum	#	%	cum	#	%	cum
Abstinence	43	40	40	59	50	50	102	45	45
13 or <13	13	12	12	6	5	5	19	8	8
14	13	12	24	14	12	17	27	12	20
15	16	14	38	21	18	35	37	16	36
16	19	17	55	11	9	44	30	13	49
17	4	4	69	7	6	50	11	5	54
18+	1	1	60	0	0	50	1	1	55
Total	66	60	60	59	50	50	125	55	55

Table 4.11B: Age At First Intercourse by Grade (n=227)
(note: percentages rounded to nearest whole)

Age	Grade X(80)			Grade XI(73)			Grade XII(74)		
	#	%	cum	#	%	cum	#	%	cum
Abstinence	42	53	53	28	38	38	32	43	43
13 or <13	10	13	13	7	10	10	2	3	3
14	13	16	29	11	15	25	3	4	7
15	13	16	45	14	19	44	10	14	21
16	2	3	48	12	16	60	16	22	43
17	0	0	48	1	1	61	10	14	57
18+	0	0	48	0	0	61	1	1	58
Total	38	48	48	45	62	62	42	57	58

When Table 4.11B is examined, the differences shown in the sexual activity of the three grade levels is worth discussing. Initially, it should be apparent that the level of sexual activity is lowest for the younger students, the grade tens. However, the grade twelve respondents, the oldest group in the school, are less active sexually than their grade eleven counterparts, and yet are an important year older in age. Most interesting is the fact that 21% of the grade twelves reported being sexually active by the age of 15 (the year most students enter the high school arena), as compared to 44% of the grade eleven respondents and 45% of the grade ten students. This supports the premise forwarded earlier that groups differ in attitudes and behaviours. More than one-third of the grade twelves, 36% of those surveyed, became sexually active at the ages of sixteen and seventeen, while only 17% of the grade elevens indicated similar behaviours. As so few of the grade ten or grade eleven group are 16 or older, it is reasonable to assume that the level of sexual activity will continue to increase for those who are currently abstinent, within the next two years.

Initiation of Sexual Intercourse

A common concern of parents and educators alike is the perception that intercourse is often a coercive activity. To address this concern, the question was asked of the respondents, "Who initiated (wanted to have) sexual intercourse first?". Tables 4.12A and 4.12B present the findings.

Table 4.12A: Initiation of Sexual Intercourse by Gender(n=227)

Initiator	Male (n=67)		Female (n=60)		Total (n=127)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Self	2	3	1	2	3	2
Both	46	69	36	60	82	65
Partner	11	16	18	30	29	23
Don't Know	8	12	5	8	13	10

Table 4.12B: Initiation of Sexual Intercourse by Grade (n=127)

Initiator	Gr X(n=38)		Gr XI (n=47)		Gr XII(n=42)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Self	1	3	2	4	0	0
Both	22	58	30	64	30	71
Partner	9	24	11	23	9	21
Don't Know	6	16	4	9	3	7

In examining the two tables (Table 4.12A and 4.12B), it is interesting to note the gender differences and grade differences that exist among the responses given to the question. Thirty percent of the females respondents, but only 16% of the male

respondents felt that the partner was the individual who initiated intercourse. Three percent of the males, and 2% of the females felt they personally initiated intercourse, while 69% of the males and 60% of the females thought that the decision was a mutual one made between both partners. More males (12%) than females (8%) did not remember.

At the different grade levels, more grade twelves responded that the decision was a mutual one, with 71% indicating such, as compared to 64% for the grade elevens and 58% for the grade tens. All three grades indicated similar perceptions that the partner initiated sexual intercourse (grade XII, 21%; grade XI, 23%; grade X, 24%), but more grade tens than any other level claimed to not remember (16%) as compared to grade elevens (9%) or the grade twelves (7%). When the two tables are compared simultaneously, it would appear that the male respondents, in particular at the grade ten level, did not remember, or did not wish to reveal the information.

Birth Control

The issue of birth control was addressed in three separate questions. The first question asked whether birth control was discussed with the partner, the second asked whether birth control was used, and the third requested respondents to identify the method of birth control used. The data collected will be presented in the following tables.

Table 4.13A: Birth Control Discussion by Gender & Grade
***data presented in % to the nearest whole**

Response	Male n=67	Female n=60	Gr.X n=38	Gr.XI n=47	Gr.XII n=42	Total n=127
1. yes, before	63%	67%	61%	64%	69%	65%
2. not before	22%	17%	21%	23%	14%	20%
3. not / after	9%	12%	13%	9%	10%	10%
4. never	6%	5%	5%	4%	7%	6%

Table 4.13B: Use of Contraceptives by Gender & Grade for Initial Intercourse *data % to the nearest whole

Response	Male n=66	Female n=59	Gr.X n=38	Gr.XI n=45	Gr.XII n=42	Total n=125
1. None Used	21%	25%	21%	33%	14%	23%
2. Yes, Used	74%	71%	68%	64%	86%	73%
3. Don't Know	5%	3%	11%	2%	0%	4%

Table 4.13C: Contraceptive Method by Gender & Grade for Initial Intercourse *data % to the nearest whole

Response	Male n=66	Female n=59	Gr.X n=38	Gr.XI n=45	Gr.XII n=42	Total n=125
1. None Used	12%	20%	18%	24%	5%	16%
2. Oral (Pill)	15%	27%	11%	24%	26%	21%
3. Withdrawal	15%	10%	5%	16%	17%	13%
4. Spermicide	2%	3%	3%	0%	5%	3%
5. Condom	57%	39%	63%	36%	48%	47%

Decisions about birth control appear to be a factor in the sexual lives of adolescents. Respondents who claimed to have used birth control varied from 23% in Table 4.13B to 16% in Table 4.13C. Why the difference? Perhaps those who did selected withdrawal as a birth control method in the third question, had not considered it as a method in the second. However, a large percentage of those sexually active are not protecting themselves, especially among the younger respondents (24-33% grade elevens, 18-21% grade tens). Less females are taking precautions than males (20-25% females; 12-21% males), and almost one third of all sexually active respondents did not discuss birth control until after they had engaged in sexual intercourse.

The birth control pill and the condom still appear to be the preferred method of birth control, with 47% of the respondents claiming use of the condom, and 21% relying on oral contraceptives. When the various grade levels are considered, it is apparent that the grade twelve students show greater awareness and maturity in making decisions about contraception. Only 5% of the grade twelve students claimed they were unprotected during intercourse, all knew whether or not a contraceptive was used, and most had discussed birth control with their partners before engaging in sexually intimate behaviour.

Why was birth control not used? Of the 29 respondents who claimed to not have used contraceptive measures during intercourse, nine did not respond to the question, fifteen claimed that the intercourse occurred as an impulsive, unplanned activity,

two respondents reported that they were insecure or shy and did not want to destroy "the mood", one individual reported that she had been raped, and two individuals stated that they were drunk at the time of intercourse and were unaware of their actions. One respondent also claimed that "it felt different"; it is assumed that this was a reference to the condom. Generally speaking, it would appear that unprotected intercourse was a result of impulsive, unplanned behaviour for most of the respondents.

Reactions to Initial Intercourse

Respondents were asked to describe their first sexual experience by checking off, or writing down the adjectives which they felt best identified the emotions they experienced at that time. As emotions are usually complex and multi-faceted, respondents were allowed to select as many responses as they felt necessary for their experience to be accurately represented. In total, there were 431 responses given, 239 males descriptors and 192 females descriptors. The responses were roughly divided into positive and negative experiences, and the responses which were written in were also incorporated. The results are presented in the following tables (Table 4.14A & Table 4.14B)

Table 4.14A: Feelings About First Intercourse by Gender * (percentages rounded to the nearest whole)

	Male n=239		Female n=192		Total n=431	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1. Negative	55	23%	111	58%	166	39%
2. Positive	184	77%	81	42%	265	61%

As can be seen by the simple chart 4.14A, for most adolescent girls, the first sexual experience is a disappointing one, leaving a memory filled with negative emotions. Almost 80% of the male responses, however, suggest that the first sexual experience for the adolescent males is a positive one.

Table 4.14B: Feelings About First Intercourse by Gender
*** (percentages rounded to the nearest whole)**

	Male(n=239)		Female(n=192)		Total(n=431)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Negative Responses						
1. Guilty	12	5%	16	8%	28	6%
2. Afraid	9	4%	26	14%	35	8%
3. Raped	1	.5%	1	.5%	2	.5%
4. Anxious	12	5%	11	6%	23	5%
5. Worried	16	7%	28	15%	44	10%
6. Betrayed	1	.5%	2	1%	3	1%
7. Hurt	0	0%	16	8%	16	4%
8. Others	4	2%	11	6%	15	3%
Positive Responses						
1. Wonderful	33	14%	13	7%	46	11%
2. Stimulated	42	18%	8	4%	50	12%
3. Loved	24	10%	28	15%	52	12%
4. Mature	16	7%	11	6%	27	6%
5. Fulfilled	30	13%	7	4%	37	9%
6. Excited	38	16%	13	7%	51	12%
7. Others	1	.5%	1	.5%	2	.5%

When the responses are examined in their entirety (Table 4.14B), it would appear the general impression would be slightly more positive than negative. However, as there were

approximately 5 male responses for every four females responses, it would appear safe to say that gender differences in feelings about initial sexual intercourse do exist.

Influence on Sexual Decisions

Respondents were also asked to indicate, from a preselected list, those individuals or things which would have the greatest influence on their personal decision whether or not to have sexual intercourse. Again, opportunity was provided for individuals to write in a personal response. When the responses were tabulated by the number of responses given to each term, friends (12%) and sexual partner(11%) appeared to generate the greatest influence for the respondents, followed closely by concerns about pregnancy, mother, concerns about STDs, father and school (all 8%).

However, because the respondents had been asked to rate their responses, by placing a "1" beside the term which influenced them the most, a "2" beside the next one, and so on, in order of decreasing influence, the responses given were examined after they had been weighted to see if there was any visible difference in influence. Consequently, a "1" response was given a value of "13", a "2" response was given a value of "12", and so on to the 13th response which was given a value of "1". The scores were then tabulated, and interestingly enough, for these respondents, the order of influencing variables changed.

Mother, father, peers and sexual partner now came in the

top four, followed closely by concerns about STDs and pregnancy. Television, radio, magazines and books increased in importance, while religious beliefs, school and medical personnel decreased. The comparisons are presented in Table 4.15. Obviously, no single variable provides the same influence for all respondents, but the influence of family, peers and health concerns do appear to be of greater concern to the respondents than those of the helping professions.

Table 4.15: Comparisons of Influences on Sexual Decision

Number of Times Selected			Responses Prorated	
Influence	#	%	Influence	ProrateValue
1. Friends	184	12%	1. Mother	1781
2. Sexual Partner	164	11%	2. Peers	1747
3. Preg. Concern	132	8%	3. Father	1734
4. Mother	131	8%	4. Sexual Partner	1709
5. STD Concerns	128	8%	5. STD Concerns	1644
6. Father	122	8%	6. Preg. Concern	1636
7. School	120	8%	7. T.V./Radio	1402
8. Relig. Beliefs	114	7%	8. Magazines/Books	1368
9. Magazines/Books	111	7%	9. Siblings	1352
10. T.V./Radio	110	7%	10. Others	1141
11. Siblings	108	7%	11. Relig. Beliefs	874
12. Doctor/Nurse	99	6%	12. School	874
13. Others	50	5%	13. Doctor/Nurse	672

Research Question Number Five:

What factors appear to have influencing effects on the sexual activity of the high school student?

As had been discussed in the previous chapter, the responses garnered from Part A, the demographic portion of the

survey, were individually compared to the question dealing with actual sexual activity (Question 1, Part 4) in order to determine whether any significant relationships existed for this group of respondents. The statistical measure used was the Chi-square analysis, which is the most popular statistic used for nominal variables as exist in this survey. Comparative analyses were conducted using the "yes/no" response from question 1, part 4 with the questions dealing with church attendance and religiosity, with perceived attractiveness, with place of residence, with family composition and parent/teen sex discussions, with several aspects of school and school-related activities, and with use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. The following table (Table 4.16) reviews the results:

Table 4.16: Comparisons of Sexual Activity and . . . (using Chi-square analysis), by Gender

Variable	Male	Female	Total
CHURCH ATTENDANCE*	χ^2=10.773 p=.0292	χ^2=11.959 p=.0177	χ^2=22.825 p=.0001
RELIGIOSITY	χ^2=1.675 p=.6426	χ^2=2.73 p=.4352	χ^2=3.895 p=.273
APPEARANCE	χ^2=2.479 p=.6489	χ^2=7.831 p=.098	χ^2=7.416 p=.1155
RESIDENCE	χ^2=4.147 p=.0417	χ^2=.316 p=.5743	χ^2=3.847 p=.0498
PARENTS*	χ^2=3.101 p=.3764	χ^2=11.9 p=.0077	χ^2=8.874 p=.031
PARENT/SEX DISCUSSION*	χ^2=6.439 p=.04	χ^2=.561 p=.7554	χ^2=5.175 p=.0752

Table 4.16(cont'd): Comparisons of Sexual Activity and . . . (using Chi-square analysis), by Gender

Variable	Male	Female	Total
SCHOOL ENJOYMENT*	χ^2=4.764 p=.3123	χ^2=10.262 p=.0362	χ^2=5.853 p=.2104
EXTRA-CURRICULAR	χ^2=4.168 p=.3836	χ^2=3.585 p=.4651	χ^2=3.451 p=.4854
CHORES/JOB	χ^2=.304 p=.8588	χ^2=.344 p=.8419	χ^2=.097 p=.9526
WORK HOURS	χ^2=1.749 p=.626	χ^2=1.405 p=.7044	χ^2=1.812 p=.6123
HOMEWORK*	χ^2=5.569 p=.1346	χ^2=2.757 p=.4307	χ^2=7.839 p=.0495
STUDY HOURS	χ^2=2.168 p=.5383	χ^2=2.937 p=.4015	$\chi^2$2.693 p=.4414
POST-SEC. PLANS	χ^2=2.168 p=.5383	χ^2=2.937 p=.4015	χ^2=2.693 p=.4414
CAREER PLANS*	χ^2=.13 p=.7185	χ^2=5.004 p=.0253	χ^2=3.335 p=.0678
GRADE AVERAGE*	χ^2=9.652 p=.0857	χ^2=17.212 p=.0041	χ^2=23.037 p=.0003
CALM	χ^2=.042 p=.837	χ^2=.882 p=.3476	χ^2=.063 p=.8021
TOBACCO USE*	χ^2=30.935 p=.0001	χ^2=32.654 p=.0001	χ^2=55.558 p=.0001
ALCOHOL USE*	χ^2=25.202 p=.0001	χ^2=8.315 p=.0807	χ^2=31.997 p=.0001
# OF DRINKS/WK*	χ^2=29.096 p=.0001	χ^2=11.396 p=.0225	χ^2=31.997 p=.0001
ILLEGAL DRUG USE*	χ^2=26.521 p=.0001	χ^2=15.944 p=.0012	χ^2=41.103 p=.0001

*p<.05

With the use of Chi-square nonparametic analysis, it was found that sexual activity was significantly influenced by several variables which will be discussed individually. For the respondents of this particular study, church attendance was a variable which appeared to have a significant relationship with the sexual activity of the adolescents (χ^2=22.825, p=.0001). It would appear that as the adolescents increased their involvement with church activities, by attending sessions during the week as well as on Sundays, the likelihood of them participating in sexual intercourse decreased. This significance held true for both genders (males, χ^2=10.773, p=.0292; females, χ^2=11.959, p=.0177). It was interesting to note, however, that the religiosity of the adolescents; or how religious they perceived themselves to be relative to their peers, did not have the same effect on sexual behaviour.

When the location of the family home was analysed according to whether the adolescents lived in the town or on an acreage, another significant relationship was discovered between residence and sexual activity (χ^2=3.847, p=.0498). For these respondents, it would appear that teenagers residing outside of the urban centre are less likely to become sexually active than those residing in town. Caution must be expressed however, for this factor could be more related to vehicle access and age than actual location of residence. A gender difference did surface for this variable, where the relationship was significant for the males (χ^2=4.147, p=.0417) but not for the females (χ^2=.316, p=.5743).

When the analysis was broken down further, it was discovered that the significance held true for the grade ten respondents (χ^2=6.96, p=.0083) and only for the grade ten males (χ^2=7.26, p=.0071).

Another variable which showed a strong relationship to sexual activity of the respondents in this survey was the parent marital status. When the responses were examined according to whether the respondents lived with both their biological parents, with a single parent, with a blended family (where the single parent had remarried), or with a foster family, it was found that respondents were more likely to be sexually active if they were not living with both biological parents than if they were (χ^2=8.874, p=.031). This variable did indicate some gender differences as well, since it held true for the female respondents (χ^2=11.9, p=.0077), but not for the males (χ^2=3.101, p=.3764). Also related to parents and family structure was the openness between parents and teenagers regarding issues of sex. Although this variable was not significantly related to sexual activity for the total population surveyed, it did show significance for the male respondents (χ^2=46.439, p=.04). Thus it would appear that parents are important influences in the sexual decision-making of their offspring.

Enjoyment of school was found to not have a significant relationship with sexual activity for the total group of respondents (χ^2=5.853, p=.2104), nor for the males who participated in the survey. However, it did have some significance for the female

respondents (χ^2=10.262, p=.0362). For the females, it would appear that the more enjoyment they had in attending school and its various activities, the less likely they would be to become sexually involved. Extra-curricular activities, on their own merit, however, did not appear to be significantly linked with sexual activity for either gender or for the group as a whole.

Also related to the issue of school and its relationship to adolescent sexual activity is the grade average attained by the high school student (χ^2=23.037, p=.0003), especially for the female respondents (χ^2=17.212, p=.0041). Significance for the male respondents was found at a slightly lower alpha level, that of.0857. It would appear that the higher the attained grades of the student, the less inclined the individual would be to participate in sexual intercourse.

Future career plans of the individual were significantly related to the sexual activity of the female respondents (χ^2=5.004, p=.0253), and were significant at a lower alpha level for the total group of respondents (χ^2= 3.3335, p=.0678). Finally, another of the school-related variables which was examined in relationship to sexual activity, that of time spent on homework, was found to be significant at the school level. Respondents who spent more time working on their schoolwork during the week, were less inclined to become sexually active (χ^2=7.839, p=.0495).

Not surprisingly, significant relationships were established between sexual activity and three other variables: the use of alcohol, the use of tobacco products, and the use of illegal drugs.

When compared to the total population, respondents who admitted to the consumption of any of these substances were more likely to be sexually active than those who did not. All three were significantly related to sexual activity at the alpha level of .0001.

When examined further, it was discovered that the amount of alcohol consumed also was significantly related to a teenagers' proclivity for sexual intercourse. The more alcohol an adolescent tended to consume during the week, the more likely he or she was to become sexually active (χ^2=31.997, p=.0001). The strength of this relationship was significantly greater for the male respondents (χ^2=30.925, p=.0001) than it was for the female respondents (χ^2=11.396, p=.0225). However, the relationship existed, and was significant for all the adolescents who completed this survey.

One of the primary purposes of this research was to gather information which might be of some benefit to the teachers of the CALM class (Career and Life Management), a class which has become compulsory for all high school students in the province of Alberta. Unfortunately, no significance was found between the reported levels of sexual activity and the students who had or had not taken the class, although this should not come as a surprise, since the numbers of students at the grade eleven and twelve levels who had not taken CALM would be extremely small. However, much of the other information gathered should be very useful for all concerned.

Students in the school are very involved in extra-curricular activities. Only 24% of the students surveyed indicated that they were not involved in any extra-curricular activities. Most were involved in at least one activity (23%), 18% were involved in two activities throughout the school year, 20% participated in three, and 14% were members of four different teams or clubs.

Work also was a big factor in the students' lives, with only 14% of the surveyed population claiming they did not have a part-time job after school. The demands of these part-time jobs on the time of the students were large. Of the 174 respondents who reported part-time work, 27% worked in excess of 15 hours per week, 18% spent between 11 and 15 hours every week at work, 26% worked between 6 and 10 hours, while the rest, 29%, worked five hours or less.

This obviously had an effect on the amount of time spent on school-related work, that is homework and study time. More than 47% of the respondents claimed that they did not even spend three hours a week on homework. Only 15% of the students (n=35), spent one hour per day during the week on homework assignments. Studying was almost non-existent. Fully 81% of the surveyed students, the same students who reported average grades between 60% and 70% as their means, did not even spend three hours a week, or thirty-six minutes a day, studying their school work. Only ten students (4%) in the entire surveyed population, three males and seven females, claimed to spend more than five hours a week as regular study time. Most of these

students, 65% anticipate going on to a post-secondary college or university after high school. For educators, these statistics must present some serious concerns about the students' work habits, priorities, goals, and future successes.

Research Question Number Seven:

What messages would adolescents like to send to their community leaders (i.e. teachers, parents, church leaders) about dating and adolescent sexuality?

The participants of this survey were asked to provide personal responses to five questions at the end of the questionnaire. These questions addressed the issues of going steady, when to become sexually active, perceived pressures to abstain or to become sexually active, and the realism of abstinence for teens. Their responses will be discussed in the following pages. Please note that although all quotes used are accurate, the names given for the respondent are totally fictitious, and are used solely to improve the readability of this document.

Going Steady: *(Explain what "going steady" means in your school.)*

When asked to explain what "going steady" meant to them, the majority of the respondents agreed that if generally meant "going out with the same individual for a long time". This is not surprising, as a similar definition was provided by the author of the research questionnaire (going out with only one person, in a mutually exclusive relationship). However, a few individuals

claimed that going steady was the same as "just going out". As Marie*, a grade ten student wrote, *"Going steady in our school is usually the same as 'going out', there is no difference. . . a person asks you out and you 'go steady', you don't date other people or see other people."* Three grade eleven students claimed that the term "going steady" was obsolete, *"We don't use that term, but if we did, it would mean mutually exclusive dating."*

Some students added to their definitions, and provided insights into their perspective of this aspect of dating. Jasmine claimed that *"It (going steady) is often implied after you have seen somebody twice. It puts a lot of pressure on both people. It also means that you see him/her everyday, do everything together. The pressure often results, in very short-term relationships."* Rosette was very blunt in her assessment, *"Going steady is a stupid term. First of all, people emphasise too much on 'oh, guess who's together now?' instead of just concentrating on being friends."* Francesca focussed on the labelling which frequently occurs in adolescent peer groups: *"It seems very obvious in our school that as soon as you go out on a date with someone, whether it is true or not, you are considered 'going steady'. If, by chance, you date more than one person at a time, you are considered a 'slut', etc."*

Although some individuals did express other opinions, the general consensus was that "going steady" involved a fairly committed relationship between two people. Many respondents focussed on this "serious aspect" of the relationship, while others

specifically mentioned that sex was expected and involved in a "steady relationship".

When to Become Sexually Active: *(How long [do you think] should a person go with someone before becoming sexually active, if at all?)*

When should adolescents become sexually active? Just as adults have a difficult time coming to terms with this issue, so do the teenagers who participated in this survey. Samples of the responses are included in Table 4.17.

As can be seen from the selection of responses provided, most of the respondents presented philosophical answers. answers such as "it's up to the couple", "whenever they're ready", or "when they love each other". As Bibby and Posterski (1985) and Kostash (1987) found, very few presented the argument that a couple should wait until marriage. Of those individuals who actually presented a time period, the responses varied from "at least the second date" to "at least one year". There appeared to be some serious disagreement as to the actual length of time a couple should have spent in a relationship before becoming sexually intimate. Most of the respondents simply focussed on the individual rights. As Abe, a grade twelve boy so clearly stated, *"How long is not for me to say. . .the time period is a totally personal thing and should be decided between the two people involved."*

Table 4.17: How long (do you think) should a person go with someone before becoming sexually active, if at all? (Sample of responses)

- I think that a person should be totally ready and not do it just because they want to hold on to the partner (Eloise, gr. X)

- they should wait until the girl is ready - guys are too pushy now-a-days (Thelma, gr.X)

- I think if you are going to have sex with someone before you are married, then you better know that person inside and out, and in order to know that much, you would have to be going out for a long time (Abigail, gr. XI)

- When they truly love each other (Iverra, gr. X)

- I think it is up to the person and if they are ready, although I didn't, I think a girl should wait until marriage (Delilah, gr. XI)

- There is no real length of time, the decision is mutual - I know of people who did it after 1 date, others after three years (George, gr. XI)

- About two weeks (unless it's a one-night stand) (Phil, gr. XI)

- As long as he or she want to wait. . .sex cannot be forced, it's something that is special and something that should be at a right time to feel special. The longer you wait, the better the outcome when it's over. (Jean, gr.XII)

- They should wait until they are married (Andy , gr. XII; Faith, gr. XI)

- 2-3 months, if they talk a lot (Alex, gr. XI)

- Whenever they feel right (Joline, gr. XII)

****all names are fictitious and provided for ease in reading***

Pressures To Become Active/Abstain*(1. Do you feel any pressure to become sexually active? If so, from what? from whom? 2. Do you feel any pressure to abstain from sex, or to NOT become sexually active? If so, from what? from whom?)*

Although the numbers presented in Table 4.18, suggest that the respondents do not believe they are under any pressures to

become involved sexually, those who took the time to write comments clearly believed that pressures were constantly being applied. The respondents appeared to agree that the peer group, the dating partner, and the media were responsible for pressures to engage in sexual intercourse, while parents, the church, and educators were more often cited as providing the pressures to abstain.

TABLE 4.18:Two questions:

Do you. . .	Yes	No	Don't Know
feel pressure to become sexually active?	70	145	11
feel any pressure to abstain?	105	108	10

Georgette, a grade ten student, claimed, *"Everything puts pressure on you. . . mostly from guys at school because that's all they can talk about. . .you feel you have to have sex so they will like you more and be interested in you."* Lenny, also in grade ten, agrees, *"My friends have all done it and they talk about it like it was the greatest thing . . . in a way, I feel left out."* Lexie, a grade eleven student, was more reflective, *"The pressure is all around you, your friends are always telling you all the guys/girls they have slept with and somehow you want to be like them. . .sex is not as wonderful as everyone says, . . . in the end, sex tears people apart, because things can always happen. I learned the hard*

way."

Even the grade twelve students felt this peer pressure to explore the mysteries of sex. Joel wrote, *"It's kind of from peer pressure. . .I don't mean that friends pressure you, but when you hear about all the people in your school who have had sex, you begin to feel like you are one of the few who hasn't, and you feel like you're missing out."* Babette sounded very confused, *"People talk about it. . . the idea surrounds me and now I'm curious. . .I want to find out what it's really like. . .nobody's pressuring me into it (not even the guy I'm seeing) but I still feel pressured."*

What about abstinence? More respondents believe they are pressured towards abstinence, but here the focus changes from peers and dating partners to parents, school, religion, and fears of STDs, AIDS, and pregnancies. Iona, a grade twelve student, wrote in response to the question, *". . .my father. Although he did not influence my decision to become sexually active, I still feel pressured by him to abstain and I know that if he ever found out, he would be extremely disappointed in me."* Also a grade twelve student, Alicia claimed, *"I am afraid of pregnancy and STDs. . .I'm also afraid that the guy I'm seeing just wants sex and I don't want to give him what he wants unless I'm sure he'll be there the next morning."* Lydia, in grade eleven showed fear, *"Sex is a very dangerous thing. . . at first it seems like you are "cool", but if you get pregnant or get AIDS, then it's not so fun. I am so scared of having AIDS that when I do decide to have sex again, I will be protected."*

Some respondents commented on the uncertain messages sent by parents. Josh, in grade eleven comments, *"My parents tell me not to have sex, although they seem to know that I will, because they warned me about STDs, pregnancy, and they gave me advice."* Others, such as Mariah in grade eleven are very emphatic, *"I'm glad that I am pressured - my religion and parents and certain friends . . . I would NEVER be sexually active outside of marriage!"* Although it was stated that the peer group plays a lesser role in the issue of abstinence, several respondents, such as Ali in grade eleven believe they also have an influence: *"Often I see some of my non-virgin friends talking about how they may have made a mistake and would do it differently if they could. . ."*

Abstinence: *(Do you think it is realistic of educators and health officials, as well as parents to expect teenagers to practise abstinence (to not have sex)? Please explain why or why not.*

When asked about the realism of abstinence as an expectation for teens, the response was an emphatic "No". Of the respondents who answered the question, 65% said "no", 25% said "yes", and 10% did not know. Of the many responses, most took on a confrontational tone, especially at the younger ages: *"We're not dumb,"* (gr. X), *"it's not their [adults'] business. . . just because in their life they 'didn't until a certain age doesn't mean they have to force that upon us,"* (gr. X), *"because it's like you're not getting any,"* (gr. X), *"if you decide to have sex, you are, . . . and as much as parents tell you to stop, the more you're going to want to do it.*

Teens have a mind of their own not their parents and hearing about practising abstinence is not what they want to hear." (gr. XI), *"sex is a fact of life. . . you guys all did it, so why should you preach to us the opposite? We are going to have sex even if you do tell us not to, so don't waste your breath."*(gr. X), and *"the more parents say "no", the more we'll do in order to feel rebellious, . . . also, when people say, "Don't do that!", you want to do it just to find out why you're not supposed to do it."*(gr. XII).

Several agreed that the expectation was in the best interests of the teens. Anthea, in grade ten wrote, *"Well, people would expect teenagers to practice abstinence because of the rapid spread of AIDS. . . what's so unrealistic about that? Teens should become a lot smarter."* Richie, in grade twelve echoed those comments, *"[Abstinence] is the best method of pregnancy prevention. . . prevents emotional scarring due to the people not being ready."* George, a grade twelve student, wrote, *"Although teens are curious and get excited easily, it is reasonable to expect abstinence if properly educated. Instead of promoting "safe sex", promote "save sex".*

Many believed that the messages being sent were unclear and ambiguous. Naomi (grade twelve) claimed, *"Because our whole society is becoming based on sex - those who expect us to abstain sometimes are sending out mixed signals. The media, social structure, everything encourages sex, not the abstinence part of it. This part also does not come out very clear in our educational system."*

Most of the older respondents, however, believed that the issue was a dead issue, that teens were and would continue to be sexually involved, and that instead of talking abstinence, educators, parents and other helping officials should be stressing responsibility. Walker, in grade twelve, noted, *"The fact is, teens are having sex, and it's not a question of telling them to abstain, it's a question of educating them better in terms of safe sex: preventing pregnancy and STDs."*

Final Comments:*(Please feel free to make any comments about teenage dating behaviours, teenage sexual behaviours and/or anything you feel may be of benefit to the researchers about this topic.*

Seventy-seven students took this opportunity to express their thoughts about dating, sex, their peers, themselves and the survey. The majority of the respondents insisted that adolescents should be treated with more respect, that is, that they are "more responsible that adults give them credit for" and that "teenagers aren't as inept and ignorant as most adults think". The strength of this argument was somewhat negated by the some of the younger respondents who still took a more rebellious and confrontational tone. As Morgan, a grade ten student wrote, *"Most teens don't have sex in order to feel 'grown up', they don't even try to be 'grown up' after. They are. Most who have had sex have also consumed alcohol and at least tried cigarettes, so at this point, they have taken part in all 'adult' activities. Therefore they*

should be treated accordingly."

Selverstone (1989) in his discussion of the re-satellization of adolescents around the peer group commented on the same age-related behaviours as Morgan; the perception that participation in these behaviours proved maturity and autonomy. Many other respondents commented on the need for more education in the area of contraception and requested that condom machines be made available in the school setting, which may be a result of the controversy surrounding placement of such vending machines in several Alberta schools in other jurisdictions.

Table 4.19: Comments on Contraception (a sample)

" I feel that a lot of unwanted pregnancies could be helped if condom machines were installed in the school. Therefore people wouldn't be embarrassed to buy them." (gr. X)

" I really wish condom machines could be put in all schools because we're already having sex, so it's not promoting it anymore. . . the least you could do is help us have it safely". (gr. X)

" I think condom machines should be put in schools. . people are scared to go into a drugstore to buy birth control" (gr. XI)

" CALM class should focus more on birth control" (gr. XI)

Other respondents (13%) commented on their perceptions that a high level of sexual activity existed in the school, a perception echoed across the country by health officials, educators, parents and the media.

Table 4.20: Comments on Perceived Sexual Activity (a sample)

" I feel there are very few virgins left in this school" (gr.XII)

" I think there are a lot of young people having sex, because you hear of someone new losing their virginity all the time" (gr. XII)

" My friends in school are a bunch of studs. . . they have sex all the time. . ." (gr. XII)

" I feel that teens now-a-days are taking sex as just something, like a kiss. . .they don't believe in waiting till you're in love" (gr. XII)

" There are so many teens today who are sexually active" (gr. XII)

". . .sex is happening a lot!" (gr. XII)

" I think most teens have sex before and more often than people think." (gr. XII)

The focus varied, touching upon a variety of issues. Several respondents made disparaging comments about the individuals who "were losers" and "followed the crowd". Others commented on strict parental discipline and controls in the home. A number of the younger respondents took the opportunity to chastise adults for attempting to control and manipulate their teenagers. Some were notably unhappy with their school, their lack of peers, their community, and placed blame for a less than desirable social life on the lack of community facilities.

Over 16% of the respondents took the time to detail the importance of abstinence as an educational focus, and as a model to live by, suggesting it was an important personal issue.

Table 4.21: Comments on Abstinence (a sample)

" I feel it's important to stay clean and pure and to be a part of the minority of virgins" (gr. XII)

" If I could change my decision, I would rather have waited until I was married. When I want to spend my life with someone, I want our sexual relations to be special as well. . ." (gr. XII male)

" I had to learn that physical closeness does not fulfil the emptiness or longing in your heart. . . this has to come from yourself. Sex should be treated very sacred and special. It should be something saved for marriage when it will mean the most." (gr. XII)

" I believe it is important for teachers to teach and stress abstinence and that abstinence is REALLY the ONLY way for "safer sex". . . (gr. XI)

" I think the push of "safe sex" is destroying our life as human beings. . . ever since "safe sex" people think that if they use a condom, there will be no ill effects, but the thought of the first night after marriage being 100% truthful with your wife will cause guilt the most - "safe sex" isn't safe from guilt." (gr. XI)

" Do not stress the use of protection. . .but stress abstinence" (gr. X)

The largest percentage of respondents, however, focussed on relationships and relationship issues such as the one raised by Orlene, a grade eleven student, *"I found it is okay for guys to date girls 2 or 3 years younger, but it is not socially acceptable for girls to date guys 2-3 years younger. . . why???"* DeeDee, another grade eleven student commented, *"Teens believe here that if you have more than one date/so long, you're a slut, and I don't believe that's true. . . you can't be expected to stay with the same partner (date) for your whole life or else how do you get to know anyone of the opposite sex?"* From Suzette in grade twelve came, *"I think that guys are less sensitive about sex than girls, . . you hear of*

more girls who want to "save themselves" until they're married. A lot of teenaged STUD guys think that you're a stud if you can "do" a chick, then throw her away. . . if a guy has screwed a lot of chicks, he's a stud, if a girl has screwed a lot of guys, she's a slut, SICKENING!!!!!"

Mia, in grade twelve, added her comments to those above, *"There is a lot of pressure from peers to participate in sexual activities, it is talked about a great deal, and often stories are swapped quite openly. . . it seems no matter who initiates sex, it is always the girls who get the bad reputation, to guys, it's the macho thing to do."*

As the teens became older, their responses became more philosophical, more reflective, and contained important messages to the others. Three were notable in their content and reflect the concerns, frustrations, fears, and pressures felt by today's adolescent:

> "I think that too many teens date just for the sake of dating and being cool. Among that there are words coming up which are irrelevant to many relationships, such as "I love you" and "I want to stay together forever", when they are only 15-17 and they have not had enough relationships to even know what love is. . . or they say such things when it's only infatuation or to get one another into bed. Even though a majority of teens seem to be quite educated about sex and what it involves and relationships, many of them are not mature enough to even be dating or thinking about it. Too many teens date just for the sake of dating, instead of just meeting people and making new friends and having a good time (not sex)." (Moira, gr. XI)

> "Teenagers are careless and driven by their curiosity and peer pressure, a lot of times, sex is not their decision, it is the decision of their friends (peer pressure). Some people are afraid to admit the regret of having sex with someone because of the expectations of their friends. If absolute truth came out about everyone's first time, then it would discourage people from having sex. It is the most sensitive matter in human behaviours and it can all be shattered by one incorrect decision. If teenagers start to treat their sexual lives

> with privacy, then they will understand completely the actual consequences of a sexual encounter. Instead of hearing from their friends that "you have to do it" and "it's the best". It's a lot harder to abstain from sex than to go out and have sex. Any person can have sex but to save yourself for one person can possible secure you with the potential of having the most beautiful relationship in a marriage with someone you have fallen in love with, without sex. If a relationship is built and held together by sex, it will not last." (Jo, gr. XI)

> "I think that teenagers do not fully understand themselves and their partners and are not emotionally ready to have intercourse. . . becoming sexually active completely changes a relationship, some people say that the change is either good or bad, but I feel that the change in the relationship I was involved in was neither good nor bad. It was just different. At the time, when I was committed, my boyfriend often pressured me to have sex with him. After five months, I decided I was ready and we protected ourselves (I was on the pill). At the time, I thought I truly loved him. Looking back, I'm not so sure. I think teenagers have to be aware that things change and although they think they are in love, they may not be later on. Things change, feelings change, and people must realise that. At the time, I did not regret my decision, and I did not feel guilty. However, my partner eventually told his friends, which resulted in everyone judging me. I felt like everyone was evaluating my decision. Teens have to be aware of the consequences both emotionally and physically. What seems right at the moment, may not be right later on." (Nanette, Gr. XII)

A great volume of information, verbal and statistical has been presented in this chapter. Among the topics examined were the peer expected dating behaviours of the adolescents, their actual dating behaviours, their sexual attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, as well as factors which may have presented influences upon these behaviours. The following chapter will discuss these results in terms of existing and potential research.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

This study attempted to examine the relationship between adolescents' peer expected dating behaviours and their actual dating behaviours. Equally important, and vital to the primary objective of the research, was the valuable information gained regarding the sexual behaviours, attitudes and concerns of the teenage participants. These were further examined and analysed for correlational comparisons.

The information gathered through the administration of this survey must be treated cautiously. A reminder is given that the generalizability of these results are very limited, given the subjective nature of the questionnaire and the restriction of the sample to the population of one small high school in a small conservative community in central Alberta.

Noteworthy is the tremendous support given this research by the students, staff and parents of the community. In essence, the high return rate took this research population from the status of a sample to that of the population itself. Examination of the responses which could be statistically significant suggest that the greatest majority of respondents treated the questions seriously and responded honestly, thus adding credibility to the results of this study.

The research primarily focussed on three areas: peer expectations of the adolescents' dating behaviours, actual dating

behaviours reported by the respondents, and sexual attitudes, behaviours and factors which may have influenced them.

Authenticity

In order to assess the authenticity of this survey, honesty of the responses had to be verified. Four factors lead the researchers to conclude that the student respondents did provide honest, authentic responses:

1. the concentration and thoughtful manner of the respondents as they completed the survey lead us to believe that they were taking the questions seriously,

2. the responses to the question dealing with honesty - over 96% of the respondents predicted greater than 50% honesty, 56% predicted honesty greater than 75% (Figure 5.1),

3. when actual grade averages were compared to the predicted grade averages, it was found that students were extremely accurate in their responses. It was surmised that if the students were honest on this response, they would like have been honest on the others (Figure 5.2),

4. the researcher, as the counsellor and educator in the school, had gained the confidence and trust of the majority of students and parents in the community, as was evidenced by the overwhelming support to this project. It was presumed, that if the students believed they could answer in confidence, without suffering any consequences for their responses, they would be more honest and open. We believe this feeling of trust followed

Figure 5.1: Predicted Honesty of Responses
* Expressed as a percentage

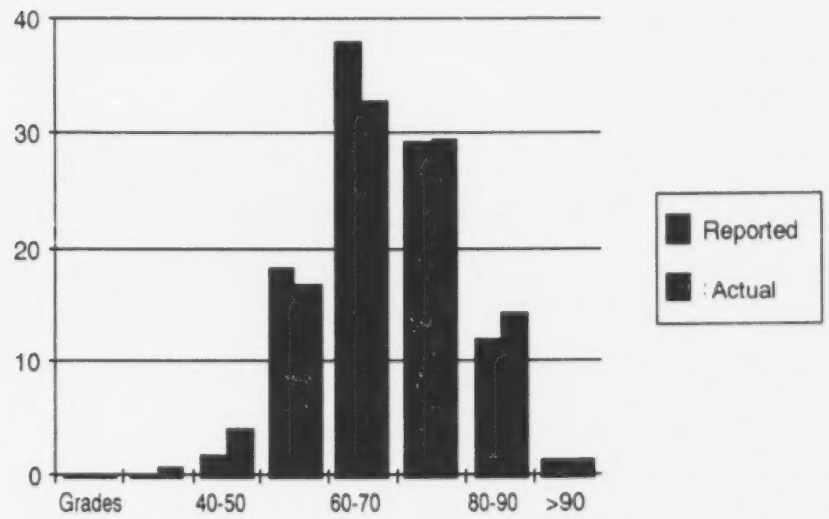


Figure 5.2: Reported vs. Actual Grade Averages.
* Expressed as a percentage

the image of confidentiality from the guidance office, and presumed, as a consequence, that the students felt safe in their responses.

Many factors had lead the researchers to arrive at the conclusion that the responses were honest and trustworthy. Consequently, it was believed that the information provided in this survey was also accurate and authentic.

Peer Expectations

Friendship is important throughout life, but at no time is the need as great as during the period of adolescence. Peer standards appear to be of particular importance to adolescents in establishing their own sexual standards of behaviour (Collins, 1974; Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Herold, 1985; Juhasz & Sonnenshein-Schneider, 1987; Rice, 1987). Certainly, the respondents in this research project voiced their concerns about "peer pressure".

Many of the actual written comments included in the last chapter, reflect the frustration and concern the majority of adolescents experience with their peers and the perceived dating expectations of these peers. The results of this study support previous research findings that adolescents are very concerned about their "reputation" and acceptance by the peer group (Kirkendall, 1961; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Lees, 1986). Girls were inordinately concerned with their "reputation" and worried incessantly about labels such as "sleaze" or "slut", while males wrote about the pressures they felt to become manly, "macho"and

"sexually experienced".

When the written responses were examined closely, it was found that the "exploitive nature of dating relationships" as outlined by Kirkendall in 1961, still was a factor with these 1992 adolescents. Kirkendall (1961) explained that girls wanted relationships with boys, to be accepted, to be loved, and to achieve feminine status, while males wanted girls to have sex and to achieve male status. Many female respondents revealed that they sought a date and felt compelled to participate in sexual activities because they wanted to "be part of the group". Note Lucy's comments, "*I think I'm way too ugly to get a guy and I really would give anything to get a date or a steady relationship with a decent looking guy. . .*" or Alexa's revealing comments, *"Before having sex, at school, I had to pretend that I was sexually active because that is the only thing desirable to the majority of guys. . .*". Willie, a grade twelve male, wrote, *"My friends in school are a bunch of studs. . .they have sex all the time. Me, I used to have sex two-three times a week with the same girl, they have sex four to six times a week by different girls. . ."*

The written responses reflected an image of adolescents caught in a web where peer expectations for socially approved and expected behaviours ruled. These responses supported Selverstone (1989) and Coleman and Hendry's (1990) claims that in their struggle to achieve independence from their parents, adolescents find themselves more dependent upon the approval of the peer group which demands total conformity.

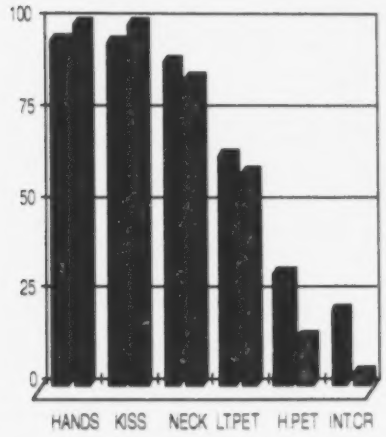
When asked to predict the behaviour expected of a couple at certain levels of the dating spectrum, the respondents revealed overwhelming support of the "permissiveness with affection" code. Indeed, minimal sexual contact was expected at the first two levels of dating, with a moderate rise at the "going steady" stage, but a marked increase in expectations for sexual intimacy at the "committed" stage. Overall, almost 80% of the respondents surveyed anticipated sexual intercourse would take place between a couple that was committed to each other.

Significant gender differences existed among the responses provided for the anticipated normative dating behaviours, (Figures 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6). Until the third level of dating, that of "going steady", males indicated significantly higher expectations of more intimate behaviours than females. At the third and fourth levels of dating, however, the expectations of the females became amazingly similar to those of their male counterparts, supporting earlier research that claims "sex is permissible for adolescent girls if they are 'in love'", (Lees, 1985; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Meikle et al., 1986; Kostash, 1987)). The elevated expectations of the male respondents would suggest that either they are reflecting inaccurate perceptions of normative sexual behaviours, or that they truly believe that they are expected to be more sexually aggressive. Huston and Alvarez (1990) claim much of the influence for these assumptions rests with the media. They wrote, "peers and television are particularly important in socialising sex-typed behaviour and emotional expression." (p. 174). Trost (1990)

PEER EXPECTATIONS:

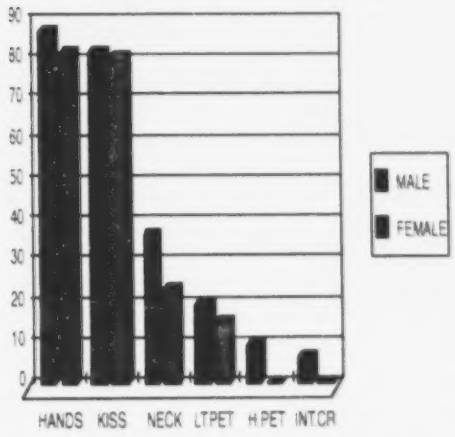
ON FIRST DATE

Figure 5.3



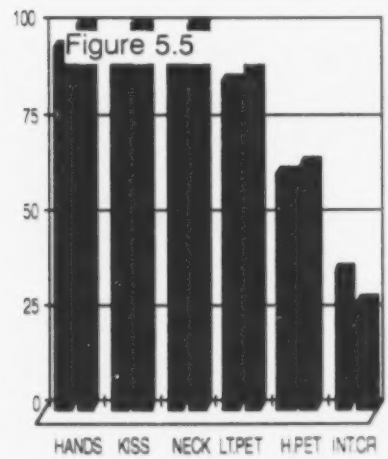
AFTER SEVERAL DATES

Figure 5.4



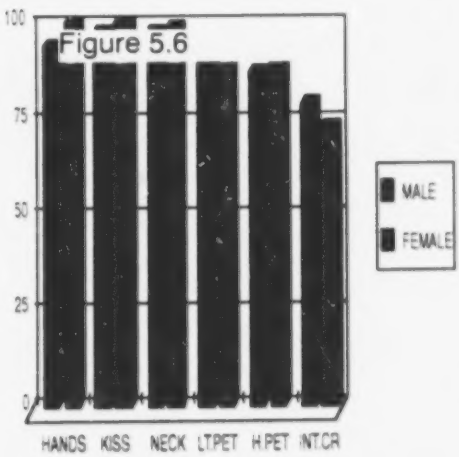
WHEN GOING STEADY

Figure 5.5



WHEN IN A COMMITTED RELATIONSHIP

Figure 5.6



Dating Behaviours by Gender, Intimacy, and dating levels. Expressed as percentages

claims that "it is important to know what we perceive as real is real in its consequences; it does not matter if the perception is wrong. . ." (p. 176), adding to the importance of this focus in adolescent dating behaviours. Behaviour will generally be influenced by these perceptions, as they then become the expectations of behaviour.

Grade differences were also noted in the expected behaviours of the respondents, with the older grade twelve students providing more conservative responses than the grade ten respondents until the third and fourth levels of dating. Again the common theme that permissiveness is acceptable when greater levels of commitment are involved is evidenced. The concern, though, is the elevated expectations for sexual behaviour, at the preliminary dating stages. Nine percent of the grade tens expect heavy petting and 5% expect sexual intercourse to take place on the first date, as compared to 1% for both categories for both grades eleven and twelve. After several dates, 24% of the grade tens expected heavy petting and 16% expected sexual intercourse, but of the grade twelves, 14% expected heavy petting, and only 7% expected intercourse.

Explanations for these differences must lie with the nature of the respondents and their immediate peer group. Educators within the school system, often commented on the incredible changes that exist from one group of students to another. Significant differences were experienced in the classroom behaviours and the academic achievements of these various grade

levels. From the written responses, strong confrontational messages were sent by the younger, grade ten respondents, suggesting anger with the adult community and other authority figures. Many grade ten respondents claimed , *"If you tell us not to do something, we will do it."* It would appear that in their search for identity, these younger adolescents have truly entered the "sturm und drang" stage of adolescence, where the relationship with adults has taken on the visage of a battleground. Thus, it could be presumed that these factors created significant differences in the socio-cultural realm of dating for the different grade levels in the school.

Responses gathered from a question which asked students to rate the individuals or factors which they believed had the greatest influence on their sexual decision making further substantiate the researchers' claims that the peer group exerts tremendous influence on teenagers of today. As expected, the responses indicated strong influences of the peer group (friends) and of the sexual partner. From all of this data, it was concluded that the peer group continues to be a vital component of the adolescent lifestyles, and that its influence continues to remain very strong.

Dating Behaviours:

The actual dating behaviours of the adolescents who responded to this survey indicate that the Reiss code of "permissiveness with affection" is slightly more important for the

females than for the males. (See Figures 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10.) Males tend to believe they are more experienced than their peers, and are more likely to be sexually intimate at less committed stages of dating than their female counterparts. Much of this variance could be explained by the females' concerns with "reputation". As Roberts (1977), Davidson (1990), and Trost (1990) explained, the adolescent female finds herself in quite a conundrum: if she acquiesces to a young man's pressures to become intimate, he may drop her and/or talk about her to his friends; if she doesn't have sex with him, he may still drop her and/or talk about her, spreading falsehoods which could be equally damaging to her reputation. Liza, a grade eleven respondent wrote, "*There is a lot of pressure from peers to participate in sexual activities. It is talked about a great deal, and often stories are swapped quite openly. . . it seems no matter who initiates sex, it is always the girls who get the bad reputation, to guys, it's the macho thing to do.*"

The concerns expressed by many researchers and members of the helping profession regarding the dangers of the "steady" relationship (Meikle et al., 1985; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Collins & Hendry, 1990) have been supported by the results of this particular survey, (Figure 5.9). The percentage of respondents who claim to have been sexually intimate rise dramatically at this level of dating, from 21% at the "several date" stage to 56% at the "going steady" stage. Indeed, the researchers cited expressed concern that this level of dating was associated with higher levels

Figure 5.7: First Date

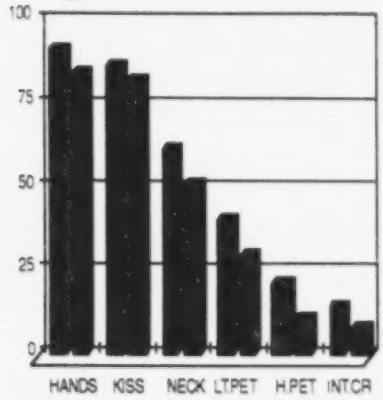


Figure 5.8: After Several Dates

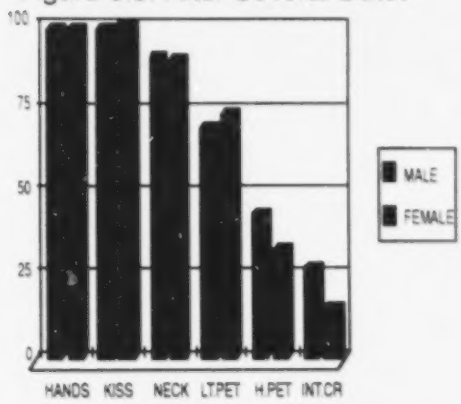


Figure 5.9: When Going Steady

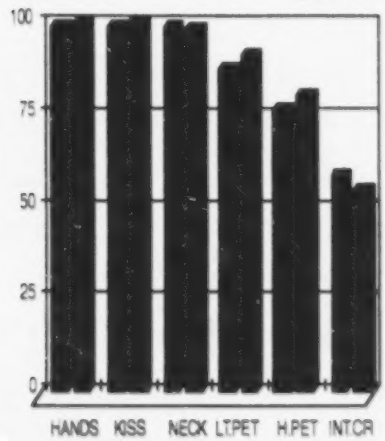
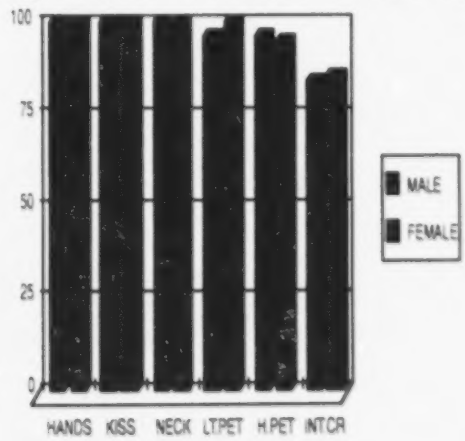


Figure 5.10: Committed Relationship



Reported dating behaviours based on individuals who experienced the various dating levels. Expressed as percentages.

of premarital sexual activity. The results of this survey strongly support those claims.

The two genders appeared to reach consensus regarding the expected behaviours at this level of dating. This would suggest that "when going steady" female adolescents believe enough affection exists in a relationship to warrant more intimate behaviour. The significant increases in the level of female sexual activity at the more intense dating situations, support strongly the belief that the female is still seen as the "gatekeeper" or the controller of sexual behaviour in a relationship (Singh, 1980; Christopher & Cate, 1985; Herold, 1984).

Gender differences in the data collected lend further support to the "double standard" in sexual attitudes. Females are expected to, and are more inclined to be less permissive than males. Again, let us turn to the revealing statements made by two of the respondents, Annie: *"Teens believe here that if you have more than one date/so long, you're a slut. . ."* and Twyla: *". . if a guy has screwed a lot of chicks, he's a stud, if a girl has screwed a lot of guys, she's a slut. . ."*

Again, grade level differences were found, with the younger respondents indicating more precocious behaviour at earlier stages of dating than their older counterparts. As reflected earlier when the discussion focussed on the peer expectations of this group, the very composition of the group, and its obvious desire to divorce itself from the "adult-approved norms" must be considered as strong factors.

If peer norms have as powerful an effect on the adolescent's behaviour as the literature would suggest, then it would follow that the actual dating behaviours would be in line with these expectations, or even be slightly lower, since, as Herold (1984) argues, teens have an inflated perception of adolescent sexual behaviour. Yet, when the respondents were asked to provide information on their actual dating behaviours, it was found that the reverse was true: that in fact, the behaviours exceeded the norms. Why?

Collins (1974) argued that there is tremendous pressure on adolescents to conform to behaviour that they think is the norm rather than what is the norm. If the males' perceptions are that "everyone is doing it" as many respondents wrote, then logically it would follow that they would attempt to match this perception with their behaviour. Also, as Herold (1984), Coleman & Hendry (1990), Schinke, McAlister, Orlandi, & Botvin, 1990) argue, young people tend to associate with others of similar values and attitudes. It would be more likely that adolescents who are sexually active would associate together and they would then expect the same behaviour of their immediate peer group. However, it would appear that the perceptions of one group to another were very different. That is, the school appeared to have definite peer groups, which had definite perceptions of each others' behaviours. Note these responses: *"Excuse me for being rude, but most of the "popular", more attractive people have had sex and they do it to be popular with their friends"; "losers attract*

losers, . . .those who drink and do drugs are their own clique. . .these people assume they are the coolest while they are actually bombing out."; and *"We have very distinct groups: 'Bad'/'Good'."* The perceptions of each group of the other is possibly very wrong. The "bad" group may believe that the "good" group would not participate in sexual activities, and so may have under-estimated the dating experiences of the school population. Yet the "good" group obviously has similar dating behaviours, with reported behaviours showing agreement to the claims made by several researchers (Weston, 1980; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; King et al., 1988) that even adolescents who do not approve of intercourse before marriage will experiment with a wide range of sexual activities. Furthermore, because sexual intercourse may not be perceived as acceptable behaviour for this group, the members would likely be more secretive about their actions, be less inclined to boast of sexual activity, and so possibly would continue to promote this image of "goodness".

Other factors which can be used to explain the difference in the actual behaviour as compared to the expected behaviour lies with the importance and consumption of alcohol among these individuals. The large numbers of respondents who reported regular consumption of alcohol during the week, suggests that many of the social activities rely upon this depressive substance. Alcohol reduces inhibitions and may be a strong causal factor in the high incidence of unplanned sexual encounters which have been reported in this survey.

Thirdly, much of the behaviour of the adolescent is related to the portrayal of sexually active role models on the television screen. Huston and Alvarez (1990) believe that we have created a "sexual consumer" society, and that the media has provided young people with role models they perceive as more appropriate for themselves than the adults in their community. Sex is portrayed as glamorous and exciting, and consequences are rarely explored.

Earlier research found that the expected behaviour was higher than the actual reported behaviour, and that the sexually experienced individuals anticipated higher levels of behaviour from their peers (Collins, 1974; Bibby & Posterski, 1985). This study found the opposite to be true for the adolescents of this school community. Explanations have been forwarded to suggest possible rationale for this unexpected reversal. Although the actual behaviours reported appeared to be higher than the expected behaviours, it is still believed that the expected normative behaviour is the ruler against which an adolescent gauges his or her actual behaviour.

Sexual Activity: Attitudes and Behaviours

Reported sexual activity among the adolescents who participated in this survey reveal that about half (55%) of the teenagers in this high school have had sexual intercourse at least once, (Figure 5.11). By the age of fourteen, 24% of the males and 17% of the females reported having been sexually active. This

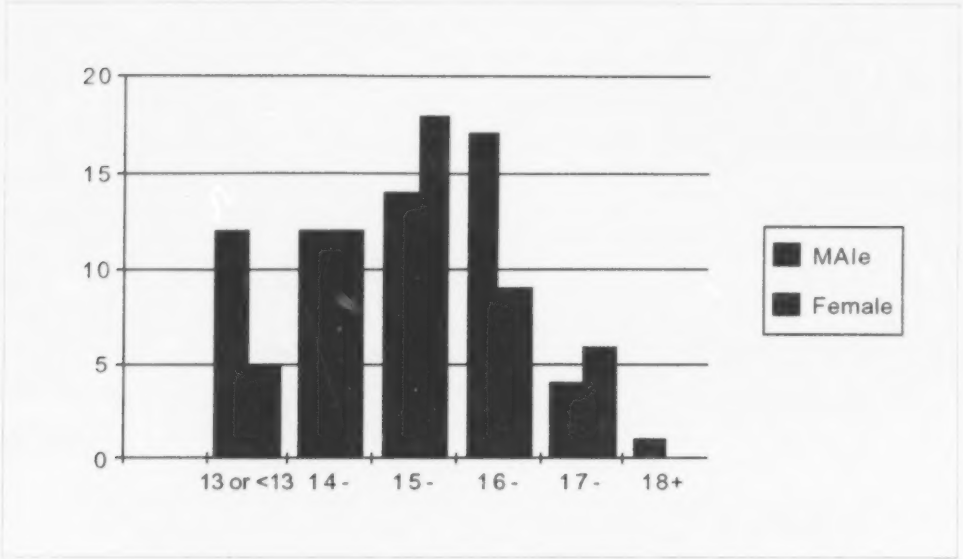


Figure 5.11: Age at First Intercourse by Gender. Expressed as a percentage.

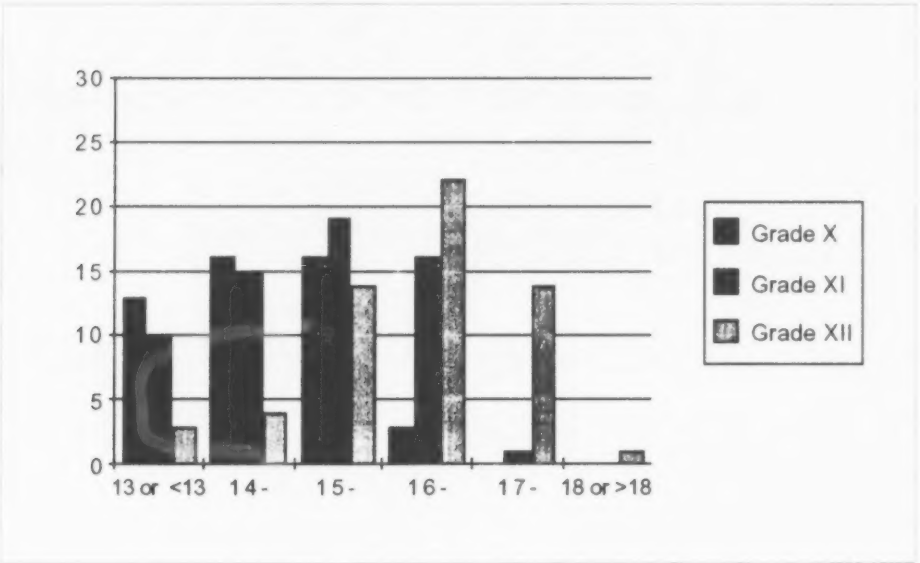


Figure 5.12: Age at First Intercourse by Grade. Expressed as a percentage.

compares very favourably with the King report (King, et al, 1988), of Canadian youth which found 31% of the males and 21% of the females surveyed were sexually active at age fourteen.

However, King and his associates (1988) found that 47.5% of his grade eleven respondents had been sexually active, while Varnhagen (1991), in a neighbouring community, found 41% of the grade eleven respondents claiming sexual experience. Sixty-two percent of the grade eleven respondents in this study claim to have been sexually active.

TABLE 5.1: COMPARISON OF SEXUAL ACTIVITY

STUDY	AGE			
	BY 14	BY 16	BY 17	BY 18
MEIKLE ET AL. (1986)	23.8%	40%	48.9%	66.7%
KING ET AL. (1988)	26%	40%	53%	
CURRENT STUDY (1992)	20%	49%	54%	55%

The results of this survey, when compared to earlier research (see table above), would suggest that few changes are occurring among the sexual behaviours of Canadian adolescents. Sexual activity among teens appear to have reached a plateau of sorts: certainly our respondents appear to fit the statistics published in other, earlier Canadian surveys.

In a 1985 study conducted among the high school students

in Calgary, Meikle found that the increases of reported sexual activity were greatest between the seventeen to eighteen year old respondents (17.8% increase) and between the fifteen to sixteen year old adolescents (13.6% increase). Our respondents, in this survey, suggest that sexual intercourse is occurring at slightly older ages, and that the greatest increases are occurring between the ages of fourteen to fifteen (16%), with a 13% increase reported between the ages of fifteen to sixteen, (Figure 5.12). Only 6% of the increase in reported sexual activity occurred after the age of sixteen. This would suggest that the majority of adolescents in this community begin their sexual careers before they enter the high school setting.

Related to this rise in sexual activity among the younger respondents are the numbers of respondents who were involved sexually, but did not take contraceptive precautions. Again, respondents reported that they were not anticipating sexual intercourse to occur, and alcohol consumption was often a factor at the time. Furthermore, in agreement with Kostash (1989) and Trost (1990), sex is perceived as acceptable if the adolescent is in love, and if the act was spontaneous and impulsive, then "love" had to have over-ruled the normal inhibitions. Finally, the perceived "invincibility" of the adolescent is still a major factor in the lives of the adolescents. When pregnant adolescents are interviewed, the most common response provided when asked about the lack of contraception was "I didn't think it would happen to me" (Meikle, 1985).

At a time when several researchers are claiming a downward trend in the sexual activity of adolescents, the figures presented here could be cause for concern. For the educators, community workers, and health officials in the community, this trend must be addressed with more effective and relevant programs. However, caution must be expounded. It is very difficult to generalise results dealing with such subjective and highly personal information from one population to another. If trends are a concern, then it would be most prudent for another survey to be administered to the population of the same high school at some future date.

Of greater concern to the members of the helping profession should be the numbers of sexually active adolescents who are still engaging in unprotected sex. Almost one-quarter of all adolescents surveyed stated they did not protect themselves during their first sexual encounter. Why not? The majority of respondents "did not want to spoil the mood": sexual intercourse was an impulsive, unplanned decision. Greater efforts must be made to educate these young people. Although they claim that they are adult enough to make decisions about sex, and to become sexually involved, too many are not willing to take the responsibility of protecting themselves.

Just as gender differences were found in expected and actual dating behaviours, differences were found in the impressions each gender had following their first sexual experience, (Figure 5.14) Over half of the females respondents

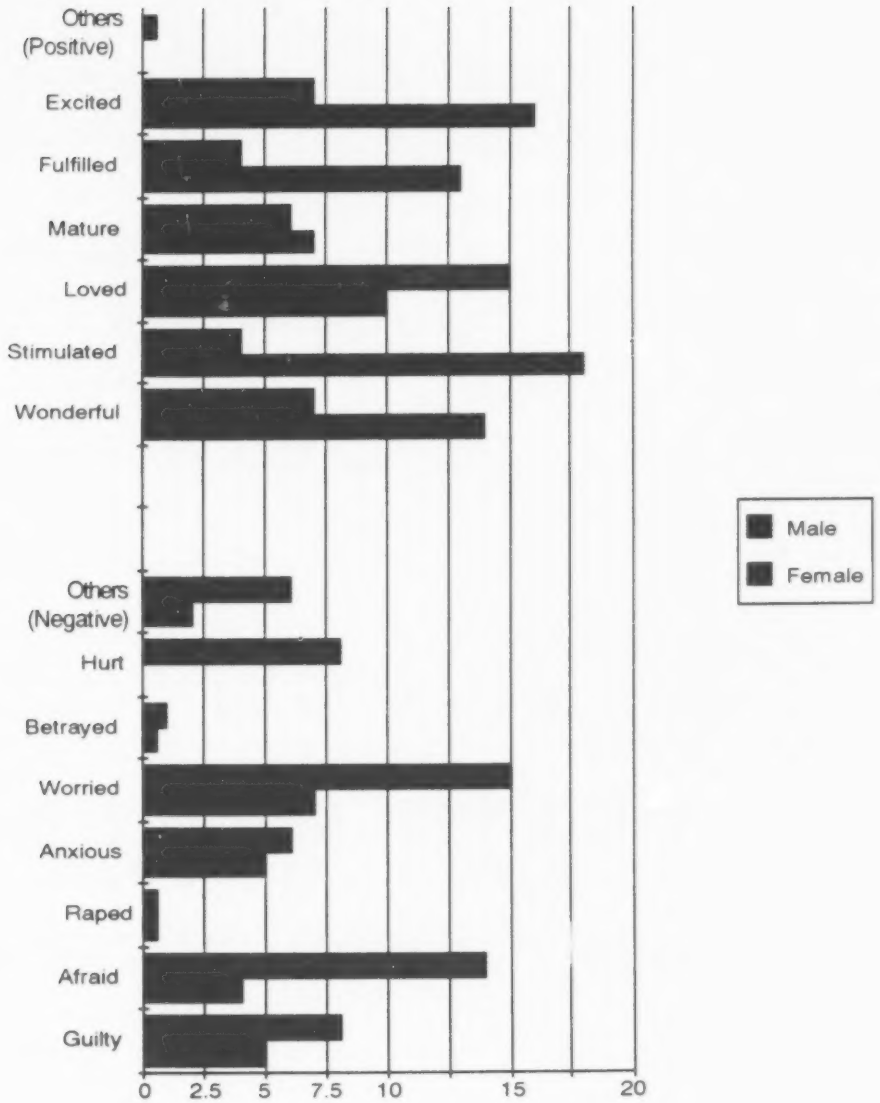


Figure 5.14: Feelings About First Intercourse by Gender
* Expressed as percentage

claimed the experience left them with negative feelings, while 77% of the males claimed the experience was a positive one. Why the difference? Several explanations can be forwarded here, all could bear further investigation. Females are more concerned with the affectional nature of a relationship, and have come to anticipate romance in its fullest sense from their books, their movies, their music, and their fantasies. Males, however, are more concerned with "sexual impulse gratification" (Juhasz & Sonnenshein-Schneider, 1987). Thus, the female adolescent seeks love from her boyfriend and acceptance from her peer group, and ends up disappointed and unhappy, while the male seeks physical gratification and acceptance from his peer group, and ends up feeling "wonderful", "stimulated", and "fulfilled". Similar findings were reported in earlier research (Kostash, 1987). It is amazing that time does have a very limited effect on some areas of human interpersonal relationships.

Parental Influence

When respondents were asked to rate various responses as to their influencing effect on their decision to become sexually active or to abstain from sex, it was anticipated that the peer group and the sexual partner would immediately soar to the top. This they did when the numbers of responses alone were tabulated. However, when the responses were pro-rated, that is the first choice was given the highest weighting and so on, down the line, mother, father, peers and sexual partner all appeared to

be equally important, (Figure 5.15).

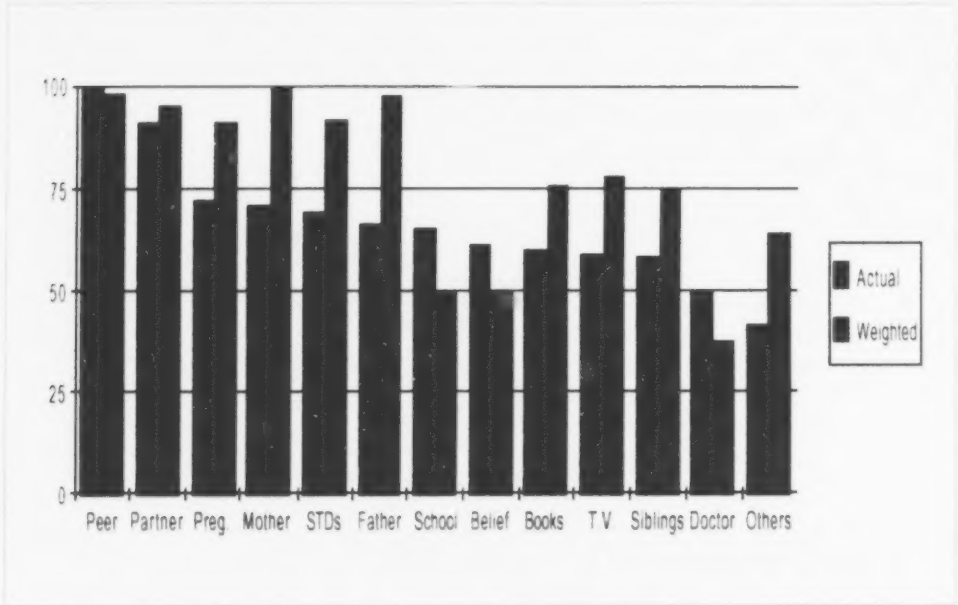


Figure 5.15: Comparison of Influences on Sexual Decision

Although this single chart cannot conclusively prove anything, it certainly causes some interesting speculation and supports some earlier research findings. Several researchers (Bloom, 1990; Schinke, et al, 1990; Coleman & Hendry, 1990; Peterson & Leigh, 1990) claim that teens tend to associate with "like-minded others" who share similar values and attitudes, and that these values and attitudes are reasonably consistent with those of the parents. For the parents, this would be an extremely gratifying and important

statement: the fact that they do have some influence over their adolescents and the behaviours of their teens.

The influence of parents took on many interesting focal points. When the statistical analyses were conducted to confirm relationships between sexual activity and other variables, several other interesting speculations about parents were raised. First, a significant relationship was found between the parent marital status and the sexual activity of the adolescents surveyed. In short, those adolescents who lived with a single parent, or a parent who had been a single parent, but had remarried, were more likely to be sexually involved than those who lived with both biological parents. Previous researchers (Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Elliot and Morse,1985) found a similar relationship and surmised that this relationship could be due to social learning that would occur in the home where children would be modelled dating behaviours by a dating parent.

Modelling of dating behaviours would not alone account for the influence of parents in the sexual lives of their children. The strong influence of religiosity in the lives of the respondents in this survey, which also support previous research (Bibby & Posterski, 1985), was most probably developed by the parents and their involvement in the church community. Similar suppositions could be drawn to other influencing variables, such as the importance of academic achievement, the value and consumption of alcohol, and the time spent on school related activities.

For the male respondents, it appeared that if the parents were interested enough to speak with them about their concerns about sex, the teens were less likely to become sexually active. Olson (1990) cited a study conducted by Miller, Higginson, Olson and Wallace in his article, which claims that the greater the parental interest in the teen's life, the greater the likelihood the teen would report sexual abstinence. Although, again, the results are far from conclusive, they certainly provide opportunities for future research.

Although no questions were specifically addressed to the issues of parental values, many of the respondents, in their written responses, indicated that their parents had a great deal of influence, or placed a great deal of pressure on them to remain celibate. Add these comments to many researchers' claims that parental influences generally remain significant in the lives of the adolescent, and it is readily apparent that the parents play a very important role in the lives of their teenagers.

Therefore, it is essential that parents send clear, unambiguous messages to their children regarding sexual issues. As one of our respondents wrote, when parents say, "Don't have sex, . . . but if you do, be careful. . ", they are really expecting the teen to become sexually active, and so are inadvertently, giving their approval. Several researchers (Hotvedt, 1990; Trost, 1990) agree that these ambiguous messages tend to confuse the adolescents, which, in turn, increases the influence of the peer group.

Equally important in the parent/teen relationship is the need for open communication, where the parent is not so rigid that the adolescent is forced to play the game "what they don't know, won't hurt them". From the written comments forwarded by the respondents of this survey, the assessment made by Bell (1972) appears to be supported. He claimed that although a trend toward more liberal views regarding sexual behaviour existed among the general population, parents continued to hold onto traditional values unless forced to deal with an unwanted situation, while teens continued to modify their personal values, while allowing parents to retain their assumptions.

In conclusion, this study supports the claims made by earlier research that parents play a very significant role in the lives of their children. The most common consensus is that parental influence is greatest over important issues such as long-term, major ethical or moral decisions (Adams & Gullotta, 1983; Forisha-Kovach, 1983; Desjarlais & Rackauskas, 1986; Bibby & Posterski, 1985; Huston & Alvarez, 1990).

Furthermore, this research supports documentation that the effects are long-lasting. When comparisons are made between the influence of the peer group and that of the parents, respondents of this survey indicated the existence of a bipolar relationship: that is, support and encouragement from both groups, peers and parents, are important. The argument that there exists an overlap in the values of the peer and the parent group (Desjarlais & Rackauskas, 1986; Bibby & Posterski, 1986; Huston & Alvarez,

1990) is believed to be true for these participants when the responses to the survey are examined and reflected upon.

Other influencing Factors

As was expected, the adolescents who participated in church life regularly tended to be less sexually active and more likely to abstain from premarital sex. Supported by previous research (Herold, 1984; Juhasz & Sonnenshein-Schneider, 1908; Rice, 1987), it could be argued that this is another situation of peer pressure, since the likelihood of religious individuals having like-minded peers would be considerable. Thus, instead of "promoting the wonderful world of sex", the peer group would be more inclined to support more conservative viewpoints such as abstinence.

The significant relationship which was found between sexual activity and use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is similar to that published in earlier research. Murstein, Chalpin, Heard, and Vyse (1989), following extensive research on the same campus within a thirteen year period of time, found that those individuals who used these substances were more likely to become sexually active. The current research found the same relationship to be in effect. Perhaps as one respondent put it, "*it's [smoking and drinking] an adult thing, and having done that, we should be able to have sex*"; perhaps adolescents see these behaviours as being overt signs of their independence and "adult" status. Whatever the reason, the relationships are strong, and further research would be recommended to determine the direction if causality

exists.

Although respondents rated school as a very low influence in their decision to become sexually active, some school-related issues did appear to have significant relationships with the adolescents sexual behaviour. Most important was the relationship between grades and abstinence. Similar to the findings of previous research conducted elsewhere, (Miller & Olson, 1985; Miller & Sneesby, 1988) it was discovered that sexual abstinence is widely accepted and practised among students of higher academic achievement.

When one grade eleven student wrote, *"For myself and some of my friends, education if still #1 priority. . ."*, he was reflecting on the difference between his goals and the goals he perceived of others around him. Not surprisingly, since goals are linked to academic achievement, having these goals also proved to be significantly linked to lack of sexual involvement, at least for the female respondents of this survey.

One of the most interesting and thought-provoking relationships to be suggested by this research, was the relationship between location of residence (urban vs. rural) and sexual activity. Nothing has been found in the research to suggest that rural adolescents are less likely to become sexually involved, but the research indicates that perhaps, for this community, location of the family home could be an influencing factor. When the analysis was broken down into smaller components, it was found to hold true for the grade ten males, but not for the older

males, and not for the females. This could lead to interesting speculation. Is it because of the location of the home, or is it because of the lack of transportation? Certainly, many extraneous variables exist which could confound this relationship, and it should be examined more closely before any conclusive statements are made.

Conclusion

The topic of adolescent sexuality is a broad, multi-faceted dimension, yet a small part of the interpersonal relationships so important to adolescents of today. Much uncertainty, many controversies, and diverse opinions make this a very difficult subject to research, and yet, for those very reasons, make it so essential to gather information in this area.

For educators and other members of the helping professions to be effective, they must have a clear understanding of the needs and the behaviours of their clientele. This study attempted to provide some insight into those areas for a small population of teenagers concentrated in one locality. As such, its primary focus can be considered exploratory. The logical progression from this study would be to gather similar data from adolescents in other communities, in other socio-economic regions, and in other periods of time for comparative analysis. This would then increase the generalizability of the study and thus, its external validity, which, in turn, would enhance its usefulness as an informative resource for individuals working in the adolescent communities.

The instrument used in this survey appeared, for the most part, to be clear and easy to follow. Some items became redundant, while others needed clarification. With moderate revisions, it should be a useful tool for many other researchers in the future, (see Appendix C).

This study does provide evidence that the adolescents are concerned about their peer expectations, and that they allow these to have some influence on their personal decisions. This research also provides evidence that the influence of the parents and their values remains very high, in particular for the important decisions to be made during the adolescent period. Dating and interpersonal relationships have become the focus of adolescent life, as teenagers search for identity and autonomy.

For many of the respondents, the perception of adolescence as a turbulent, rebellious period appears to exist. Others appear to support Peterson and Leigh's (1990) perception of social learning, by revealing adolescent conformity to parental expectations without the turbulent rebellion. Both positions could be argued; neither is conclusively supported by this research. However, both viewpoints, that of Erikson (1968) and Bandura (1977), provide important theoretical considerations for the interpretation and application of these results to the adolescent community.

Further research questions have been raised by the information gained through the research and the interpretation of the results of this survey. Although not addressed in this

research, it would be most interesting to compare the age at which sexual involvement begins with the age at which dating begins. Comparisons between parenting styles (discipline) and sexual involvement would also be most interesting and informative. Furthermore, the question which arises from the research comparing academic achievement with sexual involvement is the direction of causality. Do low educational aspirations and low academic performances result in elevated sexual behaviour, or does sexual behaviour result in lower academic achievements and depressed aspirations? Educators would find the results most helpful in their guidance programs. Finally, comparative studies conducted with adolescents of other school systems, in other socioeconomic settings, and of different religious and racial components would prove most useful to the professionals working in the area of educational psychology.

Teens worry too much about the perceptions of others. They need to be informed, to be presented with accurate and relevant information about their peer group so that they can make better, more responsible decisions. Teens need to be told that "No, not everybody is sexually active." They need to be given information such as the data found in this study in order to reinforce their beliefs. The teen who has selected abstinence as a course of action will be encouraged by the fact that only one out of every two females has been sexually active in the school. The student who has decided to become sexually active, should find the charts dealing with emotions and contraceptive use

fascinating. For all, the list of influencing variables would provide cause for reflection and perhaps, a reaffirmation of values.

This study has also found further support for the influence of the parents, church, and community on the adolescent. Many times, parents fear the worst. It is gratifying to discover the similarities that exist between the peer and the parental group, and the bipolar influence these variables have on the adolescent today.

Educators must reassess some of the curricular content in the schools and must address the issue of adolescent sexuality more seriously at younger grade levels. Too many adolescents are becoming involved in sexual intercourse without assessing fully the consequences of their actions. Responsibility and sound decision making must continually be stressed by educators, parents, and the helping professions.

Although abstinence indubitably is the best alternative for the youth of today, it does not appear to be fully accepted by the majority of teenagers as an alternative. Encouraging, however, are the number of respondents who, in their written comments, did take the time to stress the importance of abstinence to them. In order for youth to "buy into" the concept, media and other influences must also send this message to our teens. It is not enough for adults in authority positions to "preach" abstinence. Egocentric adolescents do not wish to delay their self-gratification any longer than they have to.

Although limited in generalizability, this study provides

several positive perspectives of the future of the adolescent. The strength of the family and the peer group lie in the perception teens have about their self image. Parents who are interested, caring and concerned, will continue to influence their teens in a positive manner. Schools continue to reinforce the values of their community. Peers reflect the values of the community and their parents. In essence, the teenagers reflect the changing trends and expectations of society, and as Bibby and Posterski claimed in their research publication (1985), teens of today really are not very different than the adults around them.

This document, the research, and the information it contains will be an invaluable reference tool for the educators, the parents, and the leaders of the community. It is hoped that further research will be conducted which will answer the unanswered questions, and which will further validate these findings through comparatives with other adolescent populations.

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APPENDIX A

ETHICAL APPROVAL FROM

THE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

RESEARCH AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2G5

Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
n-102 Education North Telephone (403) 492-5245
Fax (403) 492-1318

April 24, 1992

From: Department of Educational Psychology
Research and Ethics Committee

The Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Educational Psychology has reviewed the attached proposal and finds it acceptable with respect to ethical matters.

Applicants: Dr. G. Hess on behalf of Elsie Fehlauer (graduate student).

Title: Adolescent Dating Behavior: Norms and Peer Expectations.

Participating Agencies:

Recommended Change:

Roger

Chairman or Designate, Research and Ethics Committee

Apr. 1 24/92

Date

APPENDIX B

INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

LETTER TO THE PARENT/GUARDIAN AND STUDENT

Dear Parent or Guardian and Student:

As you are probably aware, there is increasing concern in the health and teaching professions about the reported numbers of sexually active teenagers, and the resultant problems of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancies and teen parents. As a result, the government of Alberta has mandated that all students in the province be participants in sexual education classes. Dr. Gretchen Hess, of the University of Alberta Department of Educational Psychology, and myself, a graduate student in the same faculty, are of the opinion that many of the reported statistics (regarding with adolescent sexual activity) are inflated when compared to the students currently enrolled in the Career and Life Management course taught in our school systems.

Much of the research which provides this information was conducted several years ago, by researchers in large Eastern metropolitan areas, and/or with college and university students as their respondents. We believe that we need to have current, relevant data available, specific to the students we are teaching, for the program of content to be best suited to the students' needs and behaviors.

On the basis of our work with high school students in xxxxx, we have prepared a research study which will focus on the dating behaviors and attitudes of our high school students. We believe that assumptions and expectations regarding adolescents' dating behaviors are exaggerated when compared to actual behaviors of the majority of our students. Therefore, we need the participation of all our students, even if they are not nor have been dating, for the data to be accurate and unbiased.

With the approval of the Superintendent of Schools, a questionnaire will be administered to high school students by their classroom teachers. No student names are required since the study is being conducted anonymously. Once the information is collected, the original questionnaires will be destroyed.

However, before we can do anything, we need the permission of you, the parents and guardians, as well as the students. Please indicate your wishes on the attached consent form, and affix your signatures.

We would appreciate a reply not later than April 17, 1992.
Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Elsie Fehlauer (Mrs.)
(counsellor/teacher)

PARENT OR GUARDIAN: ***Will you allow your son or daughter to participate in a questionnaire survey dealing with the teenagers' dating attitudes and behaviors?***

STUDENT: ***Are you willing to participate in such a study?***

1. WHAT WILL THIS INVOLVE?

Teenagers will be asked to complete one questionnaire which will take a total of about 30-40 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire consists of:

(a) demographic information

(b) personal dating behaviors

(c) sexual attitude questionnaire

(d) expected dating behaviors of peers

(e) student questions, concerns, viewpoints that arise from the questionnaire

2. WHERE AND WHEN WILL THE QUESTIONNAIRE BE ADMINISTERED?

In class, in school on April 21, 1992.

3. WHO WILL ADMINISTER THE QUESTIONNAIRE?

Teachers, with assistance from the researchers.

4. WILL THE STUDENTS BE REQUIRED TO IDENTIFY THEMSELVES?

No. The procedure being followed will prevent teenagers from being identified. All that is wanted is the information they can give us. We do not need to know their names.

5. WHAT WILL STUDENTS GAIN FROM THIS STUDY?

It is the intent of the researchers to return to the students and to review the findings of the survey. It is assumed that the data gained will be used by the teachers and administrators of the schools to plan programs

appropriate to the needs and relevant to the behaviors of the students in each school. In short, students should gain a better CALM program in addition to a better guidance program.

Parents also will benefit as an information session is planned following the data analysis, to review the findings and discuss the results. It should help increase understanding of our teens, and enhance confidence in our parenting skills.

6. WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THIS STUDY?

You are invited to contact either:

Dr. Gretchen Hess, professor,
Department of Educational
Psychology
University of Alberta
ph.(office)

Mrs. Elsie Fehlauer, counsellor,
(School)
(location), Alberta
ph. (school)
ph. (home)

AGREEMENTS

PARENT OR GUARDIAN:

I do / do not consent to having my son or my daughter _____ take part in this questionnaire survey, under the conditions as outlined.

_____

(signature of parent / guardian)

_____

(please print your name)

_____

(date)

STUDENT:

I do / do not consent to participate in this survey under the conditions stated.

_____

(signature of student)

_____

(please print your name)

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE
ADOLESCENT DATING BEHAVIORS

Questionnaire

Introduction and Directions

This questionnaire is completely **anonymous** and **voluntary**. We are interested in your dating experiences as well as your impressions of the dating habits of other teens. **We really want honest answers to the questions, but please feel free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer.** Your participation in this survey will help us better understand the dating trends of today's teenagers, and will help us make the CALM course more relevant to teenagers' needs. Thank you for your participation.

__ __ __ 1

Part 1. These questions provide background information.

(1) What is your sex (gender)?

(1) male
(2) female

(2) What is your age?

(1) 14
(2) 15
(3) 16
(4) 17
(5) 18
(6) 19 or older

(3) What grade are you in?

(1) 10
(2) 11
(3) 12

(4) Please indicate the statement about religion which **best describes** you.

(1) I never go to church
(2) I rarely go to church
(3) I sometimes go to church, but not regularly
(4) I regularly go to church, usually once a week
(5) I regularly go to church, and am involved in religious activities during the week as well

(5) Do you consider yourself religious?

(1) Not at all
(2) Less religious than most teens my age
(3) More religious than most teens my age
(4) Yes, very
(5) other _____ ***(write in)***

(6) Please mark the statement which, in your opinion, **best describes** your physical appearance.

(1) I do not consider myself attractive to others.
(2) I am not really attractive, but I do have some nice features.
(3) I think that I am average in attractiveness.
(4) I think I am more attractive than others.
(5) I consider myself one of the most attractive people in my school.
(6) other _____ ***(write in)***

(7) Where do you live?

(1) in a city
(2) on an acreage
(3) in a town
(4) on a farm

(8) Please mark the statement which **best describes** your parents:

(1) I live with both of my biological parents.
(2) I live with my mother who is a single parent.
(3) I live with my father who is a single parent.
(4) I live with my mother and a step father.
(5) I live with my father and a step mother.
(6) other _____ ***(write in)***

(9) Have you ever talked to your parents about sex?

(1) yes, a great deal
(2) yes, a bit
(3) no, not at all
(4) I don't remember

(10) Do you like school?

(1) I love school
(2) I like school more than most of my friends
(3) It's OK (average)
(4) I don't like school very much
(5) I hate school
(6) other_____ ***(write in)***

(11) What, if any, extra curricular activities do you participate in? Please list them.

(1)_____

(2)_____

(3)_____

(4)_____

(5) I don't participate in extra curricular activities.

(12) Do you have a job or chores after school? ***(choose as many as you feel best describe you)***

(1) Yes, I have a regular paid job.
(2) I sometimes do odd jobs for money after school, but nothing regular.
(3) I don't have a regular paid job
(4) Yes. I have regular chores to do after school.
(5) Yes, I sometimes have chores to do after school, but not everyday.
(6) No, I don't have regular chores to do after school.

(13) If you answered YES to #12 on the previous page, how many hours per week on average do you work during the school year?

(1) 1 to 5 hours
(2) 6 to 10 hours
(3) 11 to 15 hours
(4) more than 15 hours

(14) During an average week, I spend time doing homework assignments. . .

(1) less than one hour
(2) 1-2 hours
(3) 3 - 5 hours
(4) more than 5 hours

(15) During an average week, I spend time studying. . .

(1) less than one hour
(2) 1-2 hours
(3) 3 - 5 hours
(4) more than 5 hours

(16) Immediately after completing high school, I plan to. . .

(1) continue my education at a university.
(2) continue my education at a college with plans to transfer to a university.
(3) continue my education at a college (eg. NAIT, Grant McEwan)
(4) travel.
(5) work.
(6) don't know.

(17) What career, or job, do you have in mind for yourself when you finish your education?

(1) _____ ***(write in)***
(2) I don't know

(18) What is your approximate grade average in school?

(1) less than 40
(2) 40 - 50
(3) 50 - 60
(4) 60-70
(5) 70-80
(6) 80-90
(7) 90-100

(19) Have you or are you taking CALM 20?

(1) yes (2) no

(20) Which statement **best describes** your use of tobacco products (i.e. cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco)?

(1) I never have used any tobacco products.
(2) I rarely smoke or chew tobacco products.
(3) I occasionally (once in a while) smoke (or chew) tobacco.
(4) I used to use tobacco products, but have quit.
(5) I frequently (very often) use tobacco products.

(21) Which statement **best describes** your use of alcohol?

(1) I never use alcohol nor alcoholic substances.
(2) I used to consume alcoholic beverages, but don't any longer.
(3) I rarely drink alcoholic substances.
(4) I sometimes drink alcoholic beverages/
(5) I drink alcohol regularly, and often get drunk with my friends.

(22) The number of alcoholic drinks you would **most likely** have in one week would be:

(1) 0 drinks / week (I don't drink alcoholic beverages)
(2) 1-3 drinks / week
(3) 4-6 drinks / week
(4) 7-10 drinks / week
(5) more than 10 drinks / week

(23) When do you consume alcoholic beverages?(You may choose more than one).

(1) never
(2) only at family functions
(3) only at parties on the weekends
(4) only on weekends
(5) sometimes during the week, as well as weekends
(6) everyday, including weekends

(24) Do you, or have you, ever used any street, or illegal, drugs?

(1) never
(2) rarely
(3) occasionally
(4) frequently

(25) Do you, or have you, ever used prescription, or "over the counter " drugs, for purposes other than intended (non-medical reasons)?

(1) never
(2) rarely
(3) occasionally
(4) frequently

Thank you. Please go on to Part 2 now.

Part 2. This part of the questionnaire asks you to think about the majority of the teens in your school, and to predict what you think most of them would do, or what you would expect most of them to do, while on dates.

To help you with this portion of the survey, a brief definition of the terms used has been given below:

date: when a boy and a girl plan to meet alone or in a group at some place at some time
going steady: going out with only one person, in a mutually exclusive relationship
kissing: casual kissing, once or twice on a date
necking: more prolonged kissing, with cuddling and stroking of the hair and face
light petting: fondling of the body with the hands
heavy petting: prolonged fondling, often with the removal of clothing
sexual intercourse: full sexual relations (go all the way)

1. Two people like each other, and are on a first date:

If two people who liked each other were on a **first date,** would you expect them to...

	yes	no	don't know
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

2. Two people who have gone out several times:

If two people have **gone out several times as a couple**, would you expect them to . . .

	yes	no	don't know
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

3. A couple that is going steady:

If a couple were **going steady**, would you expect them to . . .

	yes	no	don't know
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

4. A couple that is in a serious, committed relationship:

If a couple were **seriously thinking about marriage**, or were in a deep, committed relationship, would you expect them to . . .

	yes	no	don't know
(1) hold hands?	1	2	3
(2) kiss?	1	2	3
(3) neck?	1	2	3
(4) light pet?	1	2	3
(5) heavy pet?	1	2	3
(6) "go all the way"?	1	2	3

Part 3. These questions are intended to gather information about behaviors of young Canadians while on dates. We are interested in your experiences. Please give us your honest answers. ***Again, you may leave out any question(s) which you feel you would rather not answer.***

To assist you with this portion of the survey, a brief definition of the terms used has been given below:

date: when a boy and a girl plan to meet alone or in a group at some place at some time
going steady: going out with only one individual, in a mutually exclusive relationship
kissing: casual kissing, once or twice on a date
necking: more prolonged kissing, with cuddling and stroking of the hair and face
light petting: fondling of the body with the hands
heavy petting: prolonged fondling often with the removal of clothes
sexual intercourse: full sexual relations (go all the way)

(1) ***While on a first date with someone:***

1. Have you ever been on a date with a person of the opposite sex? (See definition of "date" above).
(1) yes (2) no (3) don't know

2. On any of the first date(s) with someone you liked, did you ever. . .

	yes	no	don't know	does not apply
(a) hold hands?	1	2	3	4
(b) kiss?	1	2	3	4
(c) neck?	1	2	3	4
(d) light pet?	1	2	3	4
(e) heavy pet?	1	2	3	4
(f) "go all the way"?	1	2	3	4

2. After going out several times with one person:

1. Have you ever had several dates with the same individual?
   (1) yes (2) no (3) don't know
2. After several dates with the same person, did you ever. . .

	yes	no	don't know	does not apply
(a) hold hands?	1	2	3	4
(b) kiss?	1	2	3	4
(c) neck?	1	2	3	4
(d) light pet?	1	2	3	4
(e) heavy pet?	1	2	3	4
(f) "go all the way"?	1	2	3	4

3. While going steady:

1. Have you ever gone steady with someone?
   (1) yes (2) no (3) don't know
2. While going steady with someone, did you ever. . .

	yes	no	don't know	does not apply
(a) hold hands?	1	2	3	4
(b) kiss?	1	2	3	4
(c) neck?	1	2	3	4
(d) light pet?	1	2	3	4
(e) heavy pet?	1	2	3	4
(f) "go all the way"?	1	2	3	4

4. While in a serious, committed relationship:

1. Are you, or have you ever been in a serious love relationship where you have spoken about marriage?
   (1) yes (2) no (3) don't know
2. When you were in a serious love relationship, did you ever. . .

	yes	no	don't know	does not apply
(a) hold hands?	1	2	3	4
(b) kiss?	1	2	3	4
(c) neck?	1	2	3	4
(d) light pet?	1	2	3	4
(e) heavy pet?	1	2	3	4
(f) "go all the way"?	1	2	3	4

Part 4. The following questions deal with your sexual attitudes and behaviour. ***(please remember that your answers are totally confidential and voluntary). Again, feel free to leave out any questions which you would rather not answer.***

(1) How old were you when you first had sexual intercourse?

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) 13 or younger
(3) 14
(4) 15
(5) 16
(6) 17
(7) 18 or older

(2) Who initiated (wanted to have) sexual intercourse first?

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) yourself
(3) you both did
(4) your partner
(5) you don't remember

(3) Did you discuss birth control with your partner before having intercourse?

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) yes, we did talk about birth control before
(3) no, we did not talk about birth control before
(4) no, we did not talk about birth control until after we had had sexual intercourse
(5) we have never talked about birth control, before or after

(4) Did you use any form of birth control when you had your first sexual experience?

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) no, we did not use birth control
(3) yes, we used birth control
(4) I don't know

(5) If you used a method of birth control, please identify the method used:

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse
(2) did not use birth control
(3) birth control pill
(4) withdrawal
(5) vaginal spermicides
(6) condom
(7) diaphragm
(8) others_____ *(write in)*

(6) If you did not use birth control, would you please explain why not:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

(7) The following adjectives have been used by young people to describe their first sexual experience. Please check off the one(s) that you feel best describe your emotions about your first encounter with sex. ***Check as many as you feel best describe your emotions at that time.***

(1) I have never had sexual intercourse

(2) guilty	(9) wonderful
(3) afraid	(10) stimulated
(4) raped	(11) loved
(5) anxious	(12) mature, grown-up
(6) worried	(13) fulfilled
(7) betrayed	(14) excited
(8) hurt	(15) others _____

(write in)

(8) Who has influence you over your decision whether or not to have sexual intercourse? (***please write a 1 beside the one who influenced you the most, a 2 beside the next and so on to the one that influenced you the least)***

____(1) sexual partner	____(8) doctor/nurse
____(2) friends	____(9) religious belief
____(3) mother	____(10) TV/radio
____(4) father	____(11) magazines, newspapers, books
____(5) sibling(s)	____(12) concerns about STDs
____(6) school	____(13) concerns about pregnancy
____(7) other_____	

write in

(9) How honest do you think the teens in high school will be in answering this questionnaire?

(1) Extremely honest (90-100%)
(2) Very honest (75-90%)
(3) Fairly honest (50-75%)
(4) Not very honest (less than 50%)

Your comments. ***The final say is yours. Please feel free to make any comments on these as well as any other issues you feel are important at this time.***

(1) Explain what "going steady" means in your school.

(2) How long (do you think) should a person go with someone before becoming sexually active, if at all?

(3) Do you feel any pressure to become sexually active?
(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know

If so, from what? from whom? ***(you may identify more than one)***.
(please do not use any names, just give the relationship eg. friend, mom, T.V.)

(4) Do you feel any pressure to abstain from sex, or to NOT become sexually active? (1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know

If so, from what/ from whom? ***(you may identify more than one)***.
(please do not use any names, just give the relationship eg. friend, mom, T.V.

5. Do you think it is realistic of educators and health officials, as well as parents to expect teenagers to practise abstinence (to not have sex)?

(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know

Please explain why or why not.

6. Please feel free to make any comments about teenage dating behaviors, teenage sexual behaviors and/or anything you feel may be of benefit to the researchers about this topic.

Thank you for your participation.